

# **The Relationship between European Higher Education Policies and the National and Regional Policy Arenas**

*An analysis of European, Spanish and Catalan policies on  
university autonomy, funding and quality*

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## ABSTRACT

Higher education has become a politically sensitive issue, making it difficult to achieve institutionalised European-level cooperation and integration policies. Due to specific higher education policy initiatives at a European level and the appreciation of universities as key actors in the development of the European knowledge-based society and economy, it has become more common to emphasise the need for a European perspective on universities. However, nation-states are still solely responsible for regulating higher education and deciding national priorities. In this sense, university autonomy, funding and quality are three specific policy areas of interest for the European Union, as well as for Spain and Catalonia as demonstrated in the recent higher education policies and recommendations. The aim of this thesis is to study how European level higher education policies on university autonomy, funding and quality are adopted at national (Spanish) and regional (Catalan) levels.

This research intends to achieve this objective by analysing the European, Spanish and Catalan arenas and by focusing on the three core policy issues selected. The study has a governance and multi-governance perspective with a special focus on how policies are adopted from level to level, and the match that these adoptions have in relation to the intrinsic characteristics of university autonomy, funding and quality. The methodology used to pursue this objective is of qualitative nature based on the analysis of policy documents and semi-structured interviews.

The study reveals that the most common goals are very similar at the European, Spanish and Catalan levels. The greatest ‘match’ between policies at the different levels is found in the issue of university autonomy, whereas funding and quality assurance issues have a slight controversy and therefore do not ‘match’ so straightforwardly with the European policies. Reasons behind these findings can be found in the contextual elements of the Spanish and Catalan higher education systems, where in addition to the traditional academic values, historical, political and cultural issues have also an important role.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Some of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this thesis are presented below.

ACUP	Catalan Association for Public Universities
ANECA	Spanish National Quality Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
AQU	Catalan University System Quality Agency
CIC	Catalan Interuniversity Council
CRUE	Spanish Rector's Conference
E&T	Education and Training
EC	European Commission
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EIT	European Institute of Technology
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESIB	European Student Union
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
EURYDICE	Information Network on Education in Europe
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
LOMLOU	Ley Orgánica por la que se Modifica la Ley Orgánica de Universidades
LOU	Ley Orgánica de Universidades
LUC	Llei d'Universitats de Catalunya
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OME	Open Method of Coordination
PNECU	National Plan for Quality Evaluation
UAB	Autonomous University of Barcelona
UB	University of Barcelona
UdG	University of Girona
UdL	University of Lleida
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPC	Polytechnic University of Catalonia

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UPF	Pompeu Fabra University
URV	Rovira i Virgili University
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

European universities<sup>1</sup> have historically played an important role in the building of nation-states. Universities have supplied their nations and states with highly educated manpower, they have contributed to building national consciousness and identity, they have integrated national elites and provided a national research aptitude for the development of the national economy and society at large. Consequently, higher education and research, as the two main activities of universities, can be expected to be politically sensitive areas, creating specific challenges in trying to achieve institutionalised European-level cooperation and integration in these policy areas (Olsen and Maassen 2006:6).

The European Union does not have formal legal competence with respect to (higher) education which means that it cannot take action that leads to harmonisation. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) in its article 149<sup>2</sup> clearly excludes the ‘harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states’. Hence, (higher) education is under national legislation and competence of each member state. Despite this fact it does have policy competence to, for example, stimulate and support student mobility. In addition it does have formal competence in Vocational Training. Up to this day education is regarded as a national sensitive sector conceived as having a socialising and cultural function as well as an important role in the development and growth of the country.

Recently, due to specific higher education and research policy initiatives at a European level and the appreciation of universities as key actors in the development of the European knowledge-based society and economy, it has become more common to emphasise the need for a European perspective on universities<sup>3</sup>. Also university governance has become embedded in a variety of organised settings beyond the territorial state (Olsen and Maassen 2006:7). Now, trans-national, intergovernmental and supranational processes of cooperation and policy making in addition to the introduction of new actors, issues, solutions, resources

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term university is, for the purpose of this research, indistinct to the term higher education institution. Spain has a unitary higher education system, with universities as the ‘institution for all’.

<sup>2</sup> See reference list for complete reference.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this study we will only focus on higher education initiatives, however, acknowledging the importance of research policies as well.

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and modes of governance (Olsen and Maassen 2006:7) can be found. Moreover, according to the European Commission (EC) the advantage of a European dimension in higher education offers ‘the potential benefits of larger scale operation, greater diversity and intellectual richness of resources, plus opportunities for cooperation and competition between institutions’ (ECa 2006:2).

Higher education policies and initiatives in Europe, Spain and Catalonia form part of a multi-actor and multi-governance context in which forces, influences and pressures determine each higher education system in a way that conditions how these policies and initiatives are regarded, interpreted and ‘filtered’ to the next level<sup>4</sup>. In turn, European policies are affected by the national higher education systems and their priorities, hence policies not only ‘filter down’ from the European level but can also ‘filter up’ from national systems. In addition, the ways policies are accepted, diffused, adopted and implemented depend upon the context (in our case the EU with the increasing role of the EC and specifically through the OMC, the Spanish government and society and the Catalan regional government), the different regulatory frameworks and the specific beliefs and culture (especially the dominant academic values).

Spain joined the European Union in 1986. It signed the Bologna Declaration (1999), the Lisbon Treaty<sup>5</sup> (2000) and actively participates in the European Commission’s programmes for Education and Training. Spain has a very special peculiarity, it is also one of the most decentralised countries in Europe being organised politically into 17 Autonomous Communities. These Autonomous Communities have their respective statutes which the central government acknowledges as an integral part of its legal system. Among other responsibilities the regional<sup>6</sup> governments have the power to develop higher education state regulations from a legislative point of view and to regulate the non-basic elements of the education system. Moreover they have executive and administrative powers which allow them to administer the education system within their own territory (Eurydice 2007/08). Catalonia, as one of the Spanish Autonomous Communities, has been very active in fostering a leading role for regions both at national and European levels and holds some distinct characteristics when looking at the higher education sector.

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<sup>4</sup> Please let it be noted that the term ‘level’ in this study does not imply a hierarchical relationship.

<sup>5</sup> Lisbon Treaty, Lisbon Declaration and Lisbon Strategy will be used to refer to the same document.

<sup>6</sup> The term regional in this study refers to the regional dimension inside Spain due to its internal organisation into Autonomous Communities, or regions.

University autonomy, funding and quality are three of the core policy issues with respect to higher education in recent times. The European Union (EU) in its recent policies and recommendations has demonstrated specific interest (and involvement) in these three issues. University autonomy and quality are multidimensional concepts difficult to pin down, while funding is a crucial aspect in the relationship between the State and the higher education sector. These three areas are closely interrelated and policies that focus on increasing university autonomy always mention funding and quality, and vice versa.

This thesis aims at contributing to the debate on how European higher education policies are adopted at national and regional levels, while paying specific attention to three core policy areas: university autonomy, funding and quality. Based on the above considerations this study has as basic elements the notion of higher education governance's multidimensionality, the special characteristics of Spanish internal organisation that allow the regions to have specific competences regarding higher education and the interlinked core policy issues of university autonomy, funding and quality.

The study presented here will have a governance and multi-governance perspective with a special focus on how policies are adopted from level to level, and the match that these adoptions have in relation to the intrinsic characteristics of university autonomy, funding and quality. The main objective is to provide further understanding on how and which European higher education policies are adopted at national and regional level by analysing the Spanish and Catalan arenas and by paying attention to the three core policy issues aforementioned. The methodology used to pursue this aim is of qualitative nature based on the analysis of policy documents and semi-structured interviews to establish the level of synergy between the policies at the three different levels.

## 1.2 Motivation and rationale

The motivation for this topic comes from my true interest in the dynamics that affect higher education, how higher education is increasingly becoming a central element in national and international (European) policies and how these policies are formed at the different levels. Stemming from this curiosity I have a natural predisposition for Catalonia and Spain where I have lived and worked for many years. My current position at the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) has provided me with a good insight in the internal affairs of the

Catalan higher education system. It has also stimulated my interest in the European and national dynamics that affect the Catalan higher education system and how national but also regional policies refer to the European developments.

On the other hand, university autonomy, funding and quality are at the core of most higher education policies, but each one has different implications and finding the right balance in the policy practice seems to be the challenge. Consequently, a combination of the European multi-level dynamics, policy developments and the notions of university autonomy, funding and quality respond to my current interests.

Another incentive for this topic is the fact that unfortunately studies that analyse the Spanish and/or Catalan higher education are scarce in comparison to studies on other European countries such as The Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. There is little tradition both at national or regional levels in developing research on higher education issues that are not governmental driven and much less on the Spanish and Catalan higher education policies in relation to the European developments. Therefore this study aims to contribute to knowledge on and debate around Spanish and Catalan higher education. An improved understanding on the dynamics surrounding Spanish and Catalan higher education may contribute to a better comprehension of the state of the art, of the system dynamics, and of the way in which European policies are being adopted in the Spanish and Catalan policy arenas.

### 1.3 Research problem and questions

Given the multi-level governance context in which higher education systems and institutions operate in Europe and which interrelates stakeholders at the different levels, it can be expected that policy priorities at the European level may have some similarities to those at Spanish and Catalan levels (and vice versa). Considering also that the European Union does not have formal legal competence in higher education, it is left to the participating countries to endorse the EC's recommendations and policies. As a consequence, the way in which policies are understood and adopted may vary widely from country to country, and from region to region (in the Spanish case). In this line and built upon the three core issues selected, namely, university autonomy, funding and quality, the overall research problem is:

- *How are European level higher education policies adopted at the national and regional level?*

Some research questions that should help to answer the research problem are the following:

1. *How can the notion of a multi-level governance system in the context of European higher education be interpreted?*
2. *How do European level policy proposals in the area of university and college autonomy relate to national and regional policy developments with respect to institutional autonomy?*
3. *How do European level policy proposals in the area of higher education funding relate to national and regional policy developments with respect to institutional funding?*
4. *How do European level policy proposals in the area of higher education quality assessment relate to national and regional policy developments with respect to higher education quality?*

In addition, and to respond to the overall research problem and research questions, three basic assumptions have been formulated to guide the present study:

- a) *Related to changes in the dominant policy views on the role of the state with respect to higher education in Europe, higher education policies in Spain (Catalonia) have progressively increased university autonomy.*
- b) *Related to shifts in the dominant policy views on the public-private balance in the funding of higher education in Europe, higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have increased and diversified their funding resources.*
- c) *In relation to the a shift in the internal-external control balance with respect to intra-institutional quality assessment of higher education in Europe, higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have been increasingly stimulated by the national and regional authorities to accept the use of external quality assessment and accreditation mechanisms.*

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This study intends to discuss the validity of these assumptions which in turn will lead the discussion to answer the research problem and questions.

## 1.4 Methodology

The research methodology used in this thesis is qualitative. Mason asserts that through qualitative research a wide variety of dimensions of the social world can be explored. This methodology allows also to understand ‘the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate’ (Mason 2002: 1). Therefore a qualitative methodology deems to best suit the purpose of this study to explore the dynamics under which universities work as well as how these dynamics develop and affect higher education policies in a flexible manner. Another argument in favour of using a qualitative approach is that the process will involve learning from the interviews and the contents of the policies, thus the choice for an approach that permits to readjust the focus and the understanding of the research problem.

It is important to define the research limits or boundaries. The research problem and questions, and the assumptions aforementioned are a first step. The boundaries for this study are, on the one hand, the three levels analysed: European (supra-national), Spanish (national) and Catalan (regional). On the other hand the three core issues mark the policy content which the study will be focusing on. An empirical perspective will be given by the interviews of representatives of the national and regional levels. The European level will be taken into account exclusively through policy documents. The theoretical discussion and conceptualisation, together with the analytical framework have driven the research process through its main steps: formulation of the idea, data collection and interpretation.

The study’s objective is a combination of exploration, explanation and description. The exploratory dimension is due to the fact that this study is the first of its kind in Catalonia. Explanation, because it seeks to make intelligible the events or regularities that have been observed (Blakie 2000:23). In the case of this thesis it seeks to bring forth the patterns and regularities in the European, Spanish and Catalan higher education policies. The descriptive component answers the need to establish and bring forth the context in which the analysis is undertaken, as context plays a crucial role in social science activities.

The research strategy is aimed at determining the nature of regularities, or networks of regularities (Blakie 2000:25) and hence contributing to a better understanding of an event, in this case, of the dynamics of European, Spanish and Catalan higher education policies.

### **1.4.1 Research data**

The research data will be mainly primary data and secondary data and to a lesser degree tertiary data. Primary data will be gathered through the research technique of semi-structured interviews with key representatives of the Catalan public universities, the *Generalitat de Catalunya*<sup>7</sup> and the national authorities (representing the regional and national levels). Secondary data will include relevant policy and legislation documents to ensure comprehensiveness of the study. Lastly, tertiary data will come in the form of previous studies with similar objectives encountered along the research process.

The selection of the data sources responds largely to the availability and cooperativeness of the interviewees and the current policy and legislation documents. The objective of the data collection is to have a perspective of the public institutions, the regional government and the national government represented, and in addition to include the relevant and major European, Spanish and Catalan policy and legislation documents.

Qualitative interviewing has been chosen as an adequate qualitative technique when considering people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations and experiences and which provide meaningful properties of the social reality (Mason 2002:63). The second technique used in this study, that of document analysis, provides a thorough understanding of the contents of the major higher education policy developments in the European, Spanish and Catalan policy arenas.

#### ***Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews have been chosen because this technique allows for a two-way conversational approach where the questions are well thought out in advance, but allow for new questions to be brought up as a result of what the interviewee says. Semi-structured interviews permit enough focus for the research problem and questions to be answered as well as the freedom for new information and discussions to come forth which proved crucial

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<sup>7</sup>Regional Government of Catalonia. Hereafter also mentioned as *Generalitat*.



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for this study. It also offers the possibility for an informal and less-constrained setting in which the questions and the time for each one can be tailored to the situation and the interviewee (Mason 2002).

For the semi-structured interviews a set of questions<sup>8</sup> were prepared that aimed at bringing forth the vision of the different universities and institutions on the questions asked. The duration of the interviews depended on the informant, and lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

Contact was made with the potential interviewees by an email in which I introduced myself, the research objective and the approximate duration of the interview, as well as asking them if they would accept to be interviewed. Fourteen invitations to potential interviewees were sent, out of which one replied that he was not prepared to answer the questions, three never responded and ten accepted. The potential interviewees were selected to represent the public universities (five of the eight universities were finally represented), the regional authorities with competence in the higher education sector and the Ministry under which higher education is regulated at present.

Once the respondents had accepted to be interviewed the questions were sent to them with a brief introduction of the aim of the research (in English and Catalan/Spanish). The interviews were held in Catalan or Spanish. Interviews were recorded prior consent. The semi-structured interview permitted the meeting to evolve freely, nearly as a conversation and to improvise new questions according to the explanations provided by the interviewees. Interviewees were informed that no direct quotations would be made on their opinions.

The information gathered through the interviews was fundamental for selecting the three core policy issues to analyse as they appeared reiteratively in the conversations as major areas of concern. In addition, the data the interviews provided has been used to contrast the contents of the policies at the Spanish and Catalan levels.

### *Policy documents*

The policy documents used for this study can be divided according to the scope of effect of the document which also coincides with the three levels taken into account in the context: Europe, Spain and Catalonia (see table 1.1 below for a detailed relation of the documents).

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<sup>8</sup> See appendix 2 (section 7.2) for interview questions.

*Table 1.1 European, Spanish and Catalan policy documents (by chronological order)*

Europe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Magna Charta Universitatum</li> <li>▪ Sorbonne Declaration</li> <li>▪ Bologna Declaration</li> <li>▪ Prague Communiqué</li> <li>▪ Berlin Communiqué</li> <li>▪ The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge</li> <li>▪ Investing Efficiently in Education and Training: an imperative for Europe</li> <li>▪ Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</li> <li>▪ Bergen Communiqué</li> <li>▪ Mobilising the Brainpower of Europe: Enabling Universities to Make their Full Contribution to the Lisbon Strategy</li> <li>▪ Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Research and Innovation</li> <li>▪ Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training systems</li> <li>▪ London Communiqué</li> <li>▪ The Lisbon Declaration. Europe's Universities beyond 2010: Diversity with a Common Purpose</li> <li>▪ Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué</li> </ul>
Spain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University Report (or Bricall Report)</li> <li>▪ Funding of the Spanish University System</li> <li>▪ University Strategy 2015</li> </ul>
Catalonia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For a New University Model</li> <li>▪ White Paper of the University of Catalonia</li> </ul>

## Laws

Legislation is of crucial importance in Spanish higher education as university activities are strongly regulated by national and regional authorities. Regulations go from the academic programmes universities can offer to the contractual processes of teachers and researchers

(i.e. all professors working in Catalan public institutions must learn Catalan in a defined period of time by law).

Hence this research cannot go by without a thorough understanding of the current legislation at European, Spanish and Catalan level (see table 1.2 below for a relation of the legislation).

*Table 1.2 European, Spanish and Catalan legislation*

<b>European legislation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union</li> <li>▪ Treaty of Amsterdam</li> <li>▪ Lisbon Treaty</li> </ul>
<b>National legislation<sup>9</sup>:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University Reform Act</li> <li>▪ University Acts (2001 and 2007).</li> <li>▪ Framework document on the integration of the Spanish university system in the European Higher Education Area</li> </ul>
<b>Catalan legislation:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Catalan University Act</li> </ul>

## 1.5 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations that must be mentioned regarding the scope of the study, the data collection process and the topic itself. In relation to the scope of the study, using three different levels for the analysis proves very difficult if not impossible for capturing all the different elements and the key stakeholders (and the relations between them) which would be necessary for a comprehensive study.

The second limitation, concerning the data collection process, is basically twofold: first, the data sources, and second the information provided by the interviewees. Regarding the data sources, the study lacks a representation of the European level in the interviews (time and

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<sup>9</sup> All legislation names have been translated into English by the author.

availability are the cause for this). As for the second issue, the interview questionnaire was designed with a particular objective and research problem in mind, but the answers and the discussions from the interviews condition the final research problem and led to the delimitation of the research assumptions which are finally used in this research. If time would have permitted it would have been beneficial to carry out a further set of interviews.

Finally, as for the limitation in the topic itself, two issues arise. The first issue is comparability. There is little chance to reach general conclusions from this study since each higher education system has intrinsic and particular characteristics related to historical, social, political and economical features. Thus it is also difficult to compare the effects of European level policy proposals on other European countries. Secondly and finally, the study has worked with some cause-effect ideas or assumptions but has not focused on the causal-effect relationship at an analytical and theoretical level.

## 1.6 Thesis outline

The thesis will be structured in five chapters. The first one introduces the topic, the research problem and assumptions, the rationale behind the topic, the methodological approach and the possible limitations of the study. In chapter 2 the European, Spanish and Catalan higher education contexts are presented focusing on the major developments regarding university autonomy, funding and quality. In chapter 3 firstly the analytical framework is discussed followed by a theoretical conceptualisation of the three core policy issues selected.. Chapter 4 will link the three basic assumptions to the data gathered through the analysis of the major policy documents of the three levels and through the interviews with the aim to validate or reject them. Chapter 5 will summarise the overall findings and present some ideas for further research.

## **2. SETTING THE CONTEXT: EUROPE, SPAIN AND CATALONIA**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to outline the major policy developments of the different levels implicated in European higher education. Although the developments in the international (understood here as beyond Europe) policy arena also influence higher education policies (i.e. General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) negotiations on trade in higher education; UNESCO/OECD guidelines on quality of higher education), for the purpose of this study only the European, Spanish and Catalan contexts will be taken into account. A description of the aforementioned levels or contexts, with special attention to the aspects of university autonomy, funding and quality, will be presented in this chapter.

#### **2.1.1 Europe**

European universities have historically played an important role in the building of nation-states. Universities have supplied their nation with educated and trained manpower, they have contributed to building national consciousness and identity, they have integrated national elites and provided a national research aptitude for the development of the national economy and society at large. Consequently, higher education and research have become today politically sensitive issues, making it difficult to achieve institutionalised European-level cooperation and integration in these policy areas (Olsen and Maassen 2006:6).

Figure 2.1 Map of Europe



Source: <http://www.geographicguide.net>

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) in its article 149<sup>10</sup> excludes the ‘harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states’ in the field of education. Consequently the European Union does not have formal legal competence with respect to (higher) education leaving (higher) education under national legislation and competence of each member state. Despite this fact it has some policy competence and can, for instance, stimulate and support student mobility. Up to this day education is regarded as a national sensitive sector conceived as having a socialising and cultural function as well as an important role in the development and growth of the country<sup>11</sup>.

See reference list for complete reference.

<sup>11</sup> Although we acknowledge the importance of research in both the university activities as well as in the European policy initiatives, for the purpose of this study we will focus only on higher education.

Recently, it has become more common to emphasise the need for a European perspective on universities. The activation of higher education initiatives at a European level and the appreciation of universities as key actors in the development of the European knowledge-based society and economy are reasons behind this. Also university governance has become embedded in a variety of organised settings beyond the territorial state (Olsen and Maassen 2006:7). Now find trans-national, intergovernmental and supranational processes of cooperation and policy making together with the introduction of new actors, issues, solutions, resources and modes of governance can be found (Olsen and Maassen 2006:7). Additionally, according to the Commission the advantage of a European dimension in higher education offers the potential benefits of ‘larger scale operation greater diversity and intellectual richness of resources, plus opportunities for cooperation and competition between institutions’ (ECa 2006:2). The following higher education initiatives will further enlighten the developments at the European level.

### *The Magna Charta Universitatum*

More than 400 Rectors of European Universities signed the *Magna Charta Universitatum* in Bologna in 1988 coinciding with the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alma Mater. Later many more university principles from other parts of the world endorsed the document. This charter set the principles that defined ‘the university’. The aim of the document was to ‘celebrate the deepest values of University traditions and to encourage strong bonds among European Universities’<sup>12</sup>. In the charter, ideals such as university moral and intellectual autonomy (academic freedom), teaching and research as inseparable and cooperation across political and cultural borders (beyond Europe) are fostered<sup>13</sup>. The document also appeals the state authorities to follow the principles formulated in their policies. Neave and Maassen (2007:135) identify the Magna Charta Universitatum as an important foundation stone of European higher education initiatives (i.e. Bologna Process).

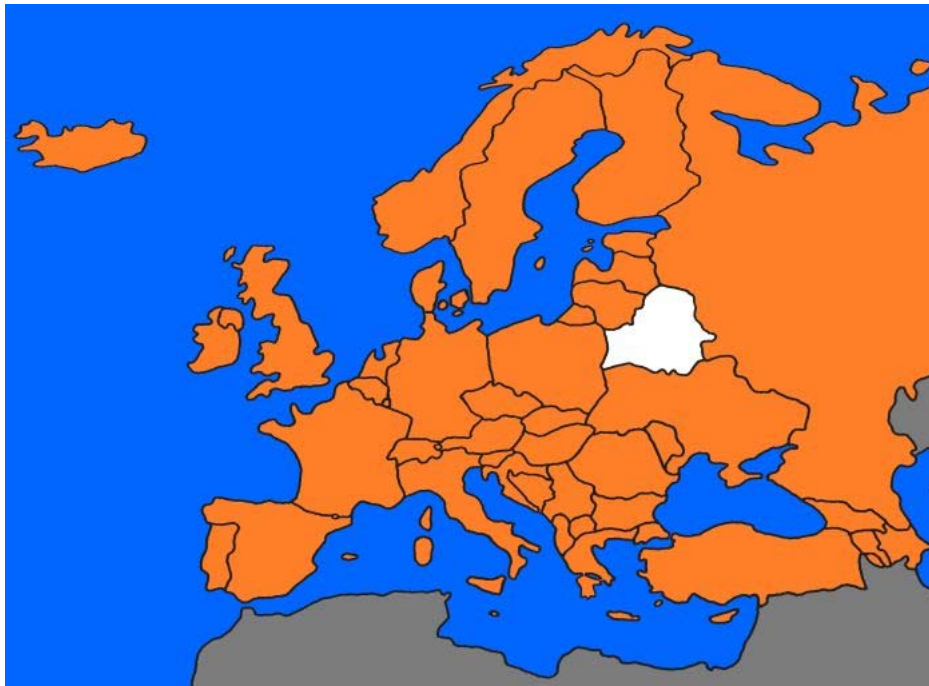
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<sup>12</sup> See references for link to complete text.

<sup>13</sup> Reiterating the idea that knowledge has no frontiers.

## *The Bologna Declaration*

*Figure 2.2 European countries participating in the Bologna Process*



Source: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/BASIC/Map.htm>

The well known Bologna Declaration was developed a decade after the Magna Charta declaration, but this time different actors were involved. Instead of the university community, the Bologna Declaration was signed by the Ministers of Education. Its origins come from the Sorbonne Declaration signed in 1998 by the Ministers of Education of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom. Their argument for the Declaration was based on the notion of a ‘Europe of Knowledge’ and alleged that it was important to strengthen the intellectual, cultural and technical dimensions of Europe, and universities had been for centuries key actors for the development of knowledge. The main objective was to ‘harmonise the architecture of the European Higher Education system’ (Sorbonne Declaration 1998).

A year later, the Ministers of Education of 30 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration which had one main common goal ‘(...) to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education (...)’ and a deadline: 2010. The emphasis of the Ministers of Education was on the cultural importance of European cooperation and the need to counterbalance it against the economic priorities. The Declaration also specified five main objectives (Bologna Declaration 1999):



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- i. The adoption of a common framework of readable and comparable degrees, “also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement”.
  - ii. The introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries, with first degrees no shorter than 3 years and relevant to the labour market.
  - iii. ECTS-compatible credit systems also covering lifelong learning activities.
  - iv. A European dimension in quality assurance, with comparable criteria and methods.
  - v. The elimination of remaining obstacles to the free mobility of students (as well as trainees and graduates) and teachers (as well as researchers and higher education administrators).

At the moment the Bologna Declaration has been signed by 46 countries. Although the Bologna Declaration was designed and promoted by the Ministries of Education, today there are other actors that play an important part in the implementation and development of the Bologna Process. The European University Association (EUA), the Council of Europe, the European Commission (EC), UNESCO and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) are present in the Bologna Follow-up Group as well as student representatives and other stakeholders.

Olsen and Maassen (2007:9) allege that initially the Bologna Process can be understood as an attempt to recover a national and educational sector initiative as a countermove to the power of the Commission and to reforms giving priority to economic concerns. It is also seen as an effort to define a European role in higher education and to give the educational sector a more important role in European policy making.

The major set-back of the Bologna Process has been the gap between intention and the organised capacity to achieve the goals set in a coordinated and consistent way (Olsen and Maassen 2007:9).

### *The Lisbon Strategy*

The Lisbon Strategy, also known as the Lisbon Agenda or the Lisbon Process, is an action and development plan set out by the Heads of State of the European Union at the Lisbon summit in the year 2000. Its major aim to make the EU ‘the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more

and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010'. The Strategy relies on three fundamental pillars:

- i. An economic pillar preparing the ground for the transition to a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy. Emphasis is placed on the need to adapt constantly to changes in the information society and to boost research and development.
- ii. A social pillar designed to modernise the European social model by investing in human resources and combating social exclusion. The Member States are expected to invest in education and training, and to conduct an active policy for employment, making it easier to move to a knowledge economy.
- iii. An environmental pillar, which was added at the Gothenburg European Council meeting in June 2001, drawing attention to the fact that economic growth must be decoupled from the use of natural resources.

The first two pillars (economic and social) have direct consequences for the role and expectations set on higher education and the activities of the higher education institutions. Research, innovation and education are part of the 'knowledge triangle' and are conceived as a tool that will allow Europe to maintain and improve its economic dynamism and social cohesion. Thus the university is envisioned as a key actor for the development of the 'Europe of Knowledge'.

The Lisbon strategy implied the need for the EU to venture into nationally sensitive policy areas and areas with institutionally entrenched diversity. As a response to the call for a modernisation programme for the universities from the Heads of State participating in the Lisbon summit, the EU developed what would later be known as the Education and Training 2010 (E&T)<sup>14</sup> programme. Furthermore, the EC proposed the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as a new governance approach allowing for handling the diversity of the old and new EU member states in a flexible manner.(Gornitzka 2007:155). In addition, the introduction of the OMC can also be understood as an example of political innovation that has brought a new template for organising political space in the EU (Gornitzka 2007:155).

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<sup>14</sup> 'E&T has outlined what a good healthy education system should look like: low drop-out rates, out-put and learning outcome oriented, with high mobility, mother tongue plus two, a higher education system that incorporated the BP, it includes the EUs for the European universities, has high investment also from private sources, and that takes a profiled and recognised place in the new economy' (Gornitzka 2009:20).

After the Lisbon summit, the Council of Ministers for Education agreed in 2001 on three strategic goals for European education and training systems (Gornitzka, 2005:156):

- To improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems.
- To facilitate the access of all to education and training systems.
- To open up education and training systems to the wider world.

In 2003 the Commission published a Communication titled *The Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge* in which it sought to open the debate on the function of universities in the context of the knowledge economy and society and set some recommendations to ensure the achievement of the Lisbon Goals. In this communication the EC asserts that the knowledge society depends for its growth on the production of new knowledge, its transmission through education and training, its dissemination through information and communication technologies, and on its use through new industrial processes or services. In this communication the EC acknowledged three goals to be pursued simultaneously:

- To ensure that European universities have sufficient and sustainable resources and use them efficiently.
- To consolidate their excellence in research and in teaching, particularly through networking.
- To open up universities to a greater extent to the outside and to increase their international attractiveness.

### *Modernisation Agenda*

In 2006 the EC presented its Communication on the *Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation* (2006a). The Agenda's main point is that universities are key players in Europe's future and for the successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. But, it adds, this sector needs in-depth restructuring and modernisation for Europe to be able to take part in the global competition in education, research and innovation (EC 2006a:11).

The Communication identifies the member states, the universities and the EC as the main actors involved and defines the EC's role in the process of modernising universities as catalytic through the provision of political impetus and targeted funding in support of reform

and modernisation (EC 2006a:11). This communication recognised a set of challenges<sup>15</sup> in the form of the need to:

- Break down the barriers around universities in Europe.
- Ensure real autonomy and accountability for universities.
- Provide incentives for structured partnerships with the business community.
- Provide the right mix of skills and competences for the labour market.
- Reduce the funding gap and make funding work more effectively in education and research.
- Enhance interdisciplinary and transdisciplinarity.
- Activate knowledge through interaction with society.
- Reward excellence at the highest level.
- Make the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area more visible and attractive in the world.

In 2007 a European Council Resolution (*Resolution on modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy*) expressed its support to the EC's Modernisation Agenda.

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<sup>15</sup> Note that three of these challenges refer directly to the issues of university autonomy, funding and quality which will later be analysed.

## 2.1.2 Spain

*Figure 2.3 Map of Spain*



Source: <http://www.myyntivirta.se>

In order to understand the Spanish higher education system it is necessary to comprehend some of the special characteristics that constitute Spain today. First of all one must recall that Spain was under Franco's regime until 1975 and that since then the country has made a considerable effort to consolidate a parliamentary democracy and a growing economy in a small time span. Spain joined the European Union in 1986. Spain is also one of the most decentralised countries in Europe. It is organised politically into 17 Autonomous Communities and two autonomous cities - Ceuta and Melilla.

*Figure 2.4 Map of Spain by Autonomous Communities*



Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_Spain\\_1720.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Spain_1720.png) (javitomad)

Autonomous Communities have their respective statutes of autonomy which the central government acknowledges as an integral part of its legal system. Responsibilities which lie under the Autonomous Communities are: organisation of self-governing institutions, changes in municipal boundaries in their area, urban planning and housing, promotion of culture and research, social welfare and health care, as well as, the regulation of the education system. Moreover, they have executive and administrative powers which allow them to administer the education system within their own territory (Eurydice 2007/08). The Spanish university funding system is, therefore, in the first place the responsibility of the Autonomous Communities<sup>16</sup> and to a smaller extent (especially on research) of the central government. It has strong regional characteristics and sometimes even major differences between Autonomous Communities (Amoros et al., 2001) to an extent that it is often considered that Spain has 17 higher education systems (Mora, 2007)..

According to Mora (2007:140) the significance of the regions in European policy making is fairly recent. Adapting universities to regional needs may be a positive action but can also bring forth problems. In Spain, the regionalisation of universities has been a very fast and far-reaching process and it has also brought forth some challenges (Mora 2007:140).:

- High political influence from governments to universities (and vice versa).
- Increased political value of universities but weakened governmental capacity to steer higher education.
- Little differentiation because of the fact that each region is considered a higher education system (irrespective of the size and number of higher education institutions).

With all this in mind we shall now enter the contextualisation of the Spanish higher education system.

### *Characteristics of the Higher Education System in Spain*

Spain has a unitary system, meaning that all higher education institutions, regardless of the types of studies and degrees they deliver are universities. Universities, on the other hand can be private or public according to the origin of their funds. Currently 68% of the universities

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<sup>16</sup> Research funding remains a national competence.

are public and 32% of the universities are private (50 public and 23 private universities). Private universities are also regulated by national law and, except the origins of their funding, they function the same way as public universities. Private universities are also allowed to deliver homologated degrees and to compete for public research funding.

Traditionally universities in Spain were under the Napoleonic system in which they were considered as state agencies and totally regulated by state laws and norms. It was not till the 1970s that the Spanish higher education system began to change from an elite system to mass higher education (Mora 2007). The first higher education reform Act (*Ley Orgánica de Reforma Universitaria* hereafter referred to as LRU) was constituted in 1983 after the fall of the dictatorship. Since then the Spanish higher education system has dealt in a relatively short period of time with a variety of issues which other European countries dealt with in a much longer time frame (Mora 2000). With the LRU began a profound transformation of the higher education system. The main reforms regarding the three core issues of this study that this Act provided were:

- An increase in institutional autonomy implying e.g. that universities were now allowed to establish their own programmes and curricula.
- Public funds were allocated in lump sums with the freedom to organise the expenditure internally.

The second major university reform Act (*Ley de Ordenación Universitaria*, hereafter LOU) was approved in 2001 and it defines the main function of the Spanish University by declaring that: ‘universities carry out the public service of higher education by research, teaching and study activities’. Since then, higher education in Spain is considered a public service that benefits the country socially, politically and economically. This perception will prove very important when adopting European policy initiatives as well as when setting the reform agenda.

The LOU also introduced some major changes regarding (institutional) autonomy and went a step further by officially incorporating quality assurance mechanisms. The incorporation of an external board in the running of the university (in the Social Council) had the aim to foster the society-university relationship and as an accountability mechanism and to introduce more independence to organise themselves as they please. Regarding quality assurance mechanisms, the law required academic staff to obtain national qualifications

before being appointed by the universities and set an obligatory post hoc accreditation of study programmes by the new National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA<sup>17</sup>). In addition, the LOU gave more independence to the regions to organise their regional higher education system thus allowing regions to create their own legal frameworks (Catalonia is an example of this as we will see in the next section).

The LOU was reformed in 2007 (*Ley Orgánica por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica*, hereafter LOMLOU) to increase the institutional freedom to design new study programmes thus moving away from the national degrees which had almost identical content in all universities. All new programmes must now undergo an ex-ante quality process by the ANECA.

Until March 2009 the Ministry of Innovation and Science (*Ministerio de Innovación y Ciencia*)<sup>18</sup> was the highest governmental agency for higher education. After the latest governmental restructuring in March 2009, higher education is once more under the Ministry of Education<sup>19</sup>. The Ministry presides the University Coordination Council (*Consejo de Coordinación Universitaria*) which was created in 2001 after the publication of the LOU. It is an institutional organ for consultancy on university and coordination policies and programming, informing, assessing and proposing issues relative to the university system.

There is also a University System Board (*Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas*, hereafter CRUE) with the representation of all the Spanish Rectors in order to co-ordinate university policy with the central and regional governments.

In spite of the university autonomy awarded by the different Acts Spanish higher education is still fairly State regulated. The central government, as seen above, holds responsibility of overall coordination of the higher education system, the European and international representation under a unique voice of the Spanish higher education system, and the coordination and control of social policies (scholarships and grants), the rest is under regional regulation, including funding mechanisms and a large part of the quality processes. Due to this there are major differences in the organisation and performance of the different

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<sup>17</sup> The LOU established the creation of the ANECA.

<sup>18</sup> Until March 2008's general elections, known as Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia*),

<sup>19</sup> In a time frame of a few years the higher education sector has been under three different ministries.



regions, with some regions performing at a higher level than others (Mora 2007:142), among these the Catalan higher education system.

Regarding funding conditions, education and especially higher education is considered as an economic benefit for the country and as such the state (from its national budget and the autonomous communities' annual budgets) provides public education for all students who meet the requirements. However, students do have to pay tuition fees for every year they are enrolled in an official study program. So, all in all, the state provides for up to 75% of the budget and the students the remaining 25% of what would be the real cost of their studies. Students coming from low-income families can apply for grants that cover tuition fees, mobility and studying material. Unfortunately the number of students receiving scholarships is decreasing, from 30% of the total students in 1990 to only 15% in 2004 due to lack of funds<sup>20</sup>.

Other recent changes that can be identified in relation to higher education funding are the introduction of formula funding with an emphasis on outputs and targeted national funding as an incentive to foster teaching quality and to promote national and international student mobility.

External quality assurance began with the first evaluation programmes initiated, like many countries, in the early 1990s by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In 2001 with the LOU and amidst the implementation of the Bologna Process, ANECA was established. ANECA was created as a Trust governed by a board of Trustees. The Ministry in charge of universities is by law the state authority above the Agency. Thus it is not an independent body. The Agency was to continue the activities already in place by the Ministry and to introduce new elements such as accreditation of programmes, service certification and quality assessment of institutions, services and programmes. Apart from the accreditation of the university degrees which can only be performed by ANECA and is done by an *ex-post* process (Vidal 2003:309), all other activities can be executed as well by regional agencies (Mora and Vidal 2000) although not all regions have quality agencies established.

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<sup>20</sup> Comisión de Financiación del Consejo de Coordinación Universitaria, 2007. See reference list for complete reference.

ANECA's mission statement declares that,

*'the ultimate goal of the Trust is to contribute to the quality improvement of the higher education system through the assessment, certification and accreditation of university degrees, programmes, teaching staff and institutions' (ANECA 2001).*

The Agency also stresses the need for transparency of public administration; that institutions must be accountable for achieving their aims and must provide feedback to society by publishing reports with evaluation results. The ANECA considers international cooperation as fundamental for the improvement of higher education quality and has actively joined the ENQA<sup>21</sup> and participated in numerous European quality projects.

To finalise this section, apart from the regulatory reforms there has been one very recent initiative that is worth mentioning: *Estrategia Universidad 2015*. This initiative is a response to the Bologna Process and Lisbon Strategy as well as a direct response to the EC's Modernisation Agenda and the European Council resolution on 'the modernisation of universities with a long-term vision for the development of Europe as a world-class competitive knowledge economy and society', and the Peer Learning Activity document 'Circling the Knowledge Triangle from the Perspective of Education: the added value in better connecting Higher Education to Research and Innovation'(2008). The *Estrategia Universidad 2015* has the objective to improve university education and research so they respond to social needs and demands and are internationally competitive. The Strategy includes the goal to have some of the best Spanish universities ranked among the top 100 in Europe<sup>22</sup>. This is to be achieved by increasing university funding, augmenting institutional autonomy and securing quality mechanisms to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the whole university system in Spain. It is still far too early to be able to evaluate the accomplishments of this initiative.

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<sup>21</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

<sup>22</sup> A specific agency, the *Fundación Universidad.es*, has been created for this purpose.

### 2.1.3 Catalonia

*Figure 2.5 Map of Catalonia*



Source: <http://www.catpaisatge.net>

Catalonia is an Autonomous Community in Spain; it borders France and Andorra to the north, and the Valencia Community to the south and Aragon in the west. It has a population of little over seven million people. In 1986, Spain joined the European Union, where Catalonia proposed the recognition of the role of the regions as a driving force for economic development and social welfare. Today the role of the regions is crucial for the development of the Spanish higher education system as shown in the previous section.

#### *Characteristics of the Higher Education System in Catalonia*

In spite of the strong state regulation, regions have an important amount of autonomy in designing their higher education systems. The central government holds responsibility of overall coordination of the higher education system, the European and international representation under a unique voice of the Spanish higher education system and the coordination and control of social policies (scholarships and grants), while the rest is under regional regulation, including funding mechanisms and a large part of the quality processes. This has conditioned the performance of the different regions, with some performing at a higher level than others (Mora 2007:142), among these the Catalan higher education system. Each region has the ability to decide in which areas of public policy it wants to prioritise. In Catalonia higher education and research have become a regional priority in recent years. A

number of important initiatives have differentiated the Catalan higher education system from other regions in Spain.

The university system in Catalonia has grown and developed significantly in recent years, both in terms of quality and size. From three highly consolidated public universities, it has grown to a system of twelve universities. The number of university students has increased steadily over the past few decades and activity in the areas of research, technology transfer and innovation have substantially gained prominence despite being in a country with little research tradition (Vilalta 2001:11).

Currently, Catalonia has eight public institutions, four of them located in Barcelona (*Universitat de Barcelona (UB)*, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)*, *Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)*, *Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)*), one distance learning institution (*Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)*)<sup>23</sup> and one per each of the three remaining provinces (*Universitat de Girona (UdG)*, *Universitat de Lleida (UdL)*, *Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)*). In total they have approximately 183,000 undergraduate students and over 37,000 postgraduate students. Additionally there are four private institutions.

One difference between the private and public institutions is funding. Private institutions do not receive public funding for teaching but they are eligible for research competitive funding. Another distinction is the different access requirements. Students can have access to private institutions without the state examination and the end of secondary education (the so called *selectividad*).

As a consequence of the 2001 LOU, in 2003 the Catalan Universities' Act (hereafter LUC) was passed. The LUC regulates the important aspects of the Catalan university system such as the academic staff policies, quality assurance policies, social participation, funding, research and the relations between university and the private sector. It is important to mention that one of the measures to be adopted included a revision of the total budget to increase it gradually up to 30%. This budget increase was a direct response to the need for additional funds for the implementation of the Bologna Process and the shifts of priorities now focused more on research and innovation in line with the Lisbon goals. These funding improvements were to impulse the development of an improvement plan for the academic

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<sup>23</sup> The Universitat Oberta de Catalunya is a partly private institution.

mission, the research and knowledge transfer mission and the third mission (the relation between the university and society) which should be articulated as a continuation, discussed and improved, of the previous strategic plans convened with the department in competency of universities (Vilalta and Gavalda 2007:43). These improvements also included a plan to develop the administration, efficiency and effectiveness of the universities to be developed in four phases (diagnosis of the actual situation, planning, implementation and revision) (Vilalta and Gavalda 2007:43-44).

The department in charge of higher education issues in the Catalan government, acts like a Ministry but at the regional level. Since 2006 it is the Department for Innovation, Universities and Enterprises (*Departament d'Innovació, Universitats i Empresa*). Inside this department, there is a specific Commission for Universities and Research (*Comissió d'Universitat i Recerca*). This Commission represents the Department in university and research issues. It is in charge of directing, planning and executing policies in these areas.

Since 1997 funding is objective-based through a contract – programme mechanism. This meant a substantial modification of the approach to co-ordination and funding of the university system more than the magnitude of the measure itself. The Catalan Autonomous Government agreed to study, in conjunction with the universities, a new system to complement the one already in place, based on the setting of objectives for the universities, assessment of the results obtained and result based funding. It was conceived as an additional mechanism to the existing basic funding system. In fact, the percentage of overall funding for universities provided through programme contracts began very low (about 2% of total funding at present) but it has since increased yearly. This mechanism also provides for the appropriate penalties (no funding or partial funding) in the event that the university fails to achieve, or only partially achieves, the agreed objectives (Vilalta 2001:14). These output-based mechanisms created in 1997 were the first step towards university competition and efficient planning. It made universities design the objectives, the budget necessary for achieving them always with the risk of a penalisation. Note that these funding mechanisms were implemented before the Bologna Process began. Subsequently in 2000 and 2002 the objective-based funding mechanisms were reformed with the aim to improve the previous ones by systematising the use of the contract programmes and introducing competition for funding that would in theory increase competition and therefore efficiency and quality in some priority areas such as research and new teaching methodologies (Vilalta 2001:14).

As for quality, the Catalan Agency for Quality (AQU) was constituted in 1996, years before the ANECA<sup>24</sup>, with the aim of promoting the improvement of quality in the Catalan university system (File 2006:41). It was legally conformed as a consortium which included the Rectors and the Presidents of the Social Councils of the public universities and the *Generalitat*. Like ANECA they are independent bodies. In the succeeding years AQU developed rapidly and has achieved European and international recognition (File 2006:48). It is also a founding member of the ENQA and REACU<sup>25</sup> and was accepted in the EQAR<sup>26</sup> in the first round. Under the Catalan University Law of 2003 AQU is considered as the main mechanism for the enhancement and evaluation of quality. It has created three commissions: evaluation of candidates for professional posts, quality evaluation and research evaluation.

A recent interesting bottom-up initiative in relation to the Catalan public higher education system is the publication of *The White Paper of the University of Catalonia*. The *White Paper of the University of Catalonia* is a bottom-up project stemming from the eight<sup>27</sup> public universities in Catalonia. In 1997 these eight public universities of Catalonia joined forces and created the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) and with it a common brand: *University of Catalonia*. This university cooperation arises as a response to the massification of higher education in the last two decades and the increasing international competition of the higher education sector. In June 2008, the ACUP presented the *White Paper* to all the actors in the Catalan and Spanish higher education system. This *White Paper* expresses the vision that the Catalan public universities have on their role in and for the Catalan society and is meant to be an objective in itself. The White paper consists of eleven chapters, 64 strategies and 73 projects to achieve the goals outlined. The vision clearly touches upon the interest areas of this research by dedicating a specific chapter to each one:

- *A University with quality education, focusing on its students and integrated in the European Higher Education Area* (Chapter 3)
- *A University based on broad institutional autonomy and a robust system of accountability* (Chapter 9)

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<sup>24</sup> But after the National Commission for Quality established in 1995.

<sup>25</sup> The Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies the purpose of which is to promote inter-agency collaboration to contribute to establishing the conditions for the mutual recognition of their evaluation processes.

<sup>26</sup> European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.

<sup>27</sup> UAB, UB, UPC, UOC, UPF, UdG, UdL and URV

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- *A University based on a suitable target- and project-based funding model*  
(Chapter 11)

The rationale behind the *White Paper for the University of Catalonia* is, according to the ACUP, the call upon universities to play a pivotal strategic role in the changing of society and the knowledge economy through three main channels: university education, scientific research and social progress, and last but not least, collective welfare and competitiveness (ACUP 2008: 11).

## 2.2 Conclusion

This chapter has described the European, Spanish and Catalan higher education contexts, defining the major actors and policy developments. Special attention has been given to the issues of university autonomy, funding and quality as they are the central focus of the present study.

As outlined in this chapter, Catalan higher education operates amidst a variety of forces and regulations, coming from the regional government as well as the national authorities. At a European level, there is a particular interest in ‘modernising’ the European universities. This implies that universities increase their autonomy (which should increase competition in the sector and enhance quality), that the so called ‘funding gap’ be reduced by a rise in overall private contributions (students and industry) and that the culture of quality leading to excellence be ingrained into higher education institutions. The priorities at the Spanish and Catalan are somewhat similar and university autonomy, funding and quality do appear as priority issues in the development of higher education.

With all this in mind, it is now time to take the next step in this study and present a theoretical and conceptual discussion that should help to provide a framework for analysing this complex context and to interpret the major conversations on university autonomy, funding and quality.

### **3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

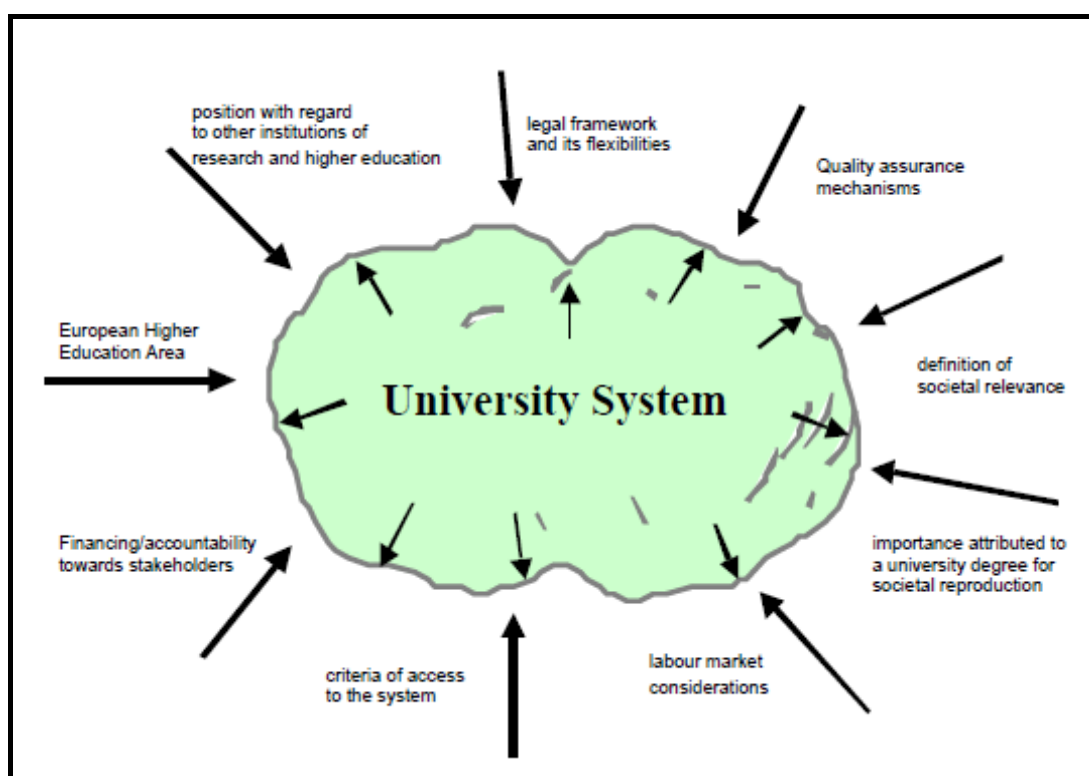
#### **3.1 Introduction**

Higher education is a complex phenomenon the analysis of which calls for tools that go beyond partial approaches and take into account the requirement to find balances between the needs of the productive sector and the economy, the needs of society as a whole, and last but not least, the needs of the individuals as human beings, all within a particular historical, social, political and cultural context (Tünnerman & de Souza 2003:11). Consequently, it deems necessary to understand and conceptualise the current dynamics and relations of higher education institutions within their environment.

Higher education systems are shaped by a set of forces and pressures that come from the context in which they operate. According to Felt (2001:7) these forces and pressures are related in a specific way (figure 3.1.). Although his interpretation is not exhaustive and for our case specifically lacking the aspect of higher education funding, it does provide a good picture of the different elements that affect universities and how they in turn also “have a say”. Each higher education system and institution faces these pressures in distinct ways and therefore has to find different ways to respond to them. This could explain why, although the national debates on higher education are often very similar, the actual policies and the way they are implemented vary from country to country.



Figure 3.1 Boundary work between the university system and society



Source: Felt 2001:7.

The Catalan higher education system also finds itself under a particular set of pressures and forces marked by the context, or contexts, in which it operates, namely global, European, Spanish and Catalan. These levels form a three dimensional grid enveloping higher education. It will prove difficult, if not impossible, to take all the part of this grid into account without losing the objective of the research at hand, but most importantly, and the first step, is to acknowledge these dynamics and accept the limitations they pose.

In addition, in line with the aim of this study we will look into the policy issues of university autonomy, funding and quality. These issues represent three of the most debated areas of higher education in recent times and the European Union (EU) in its recent policies and recommendations has demonstrated specific interest (and involvement) in these three areas. University autonomy, funding and quality are multidimensional concepts and difficult to define. In addition, in the higher education practice these policy issues are intertwined meaning that a change in one will most probably signify a modification of the other issues. Therefore these issues cannot be analysed independently from one another.

With all this said, in this chapter the objective is to discuss the context of or levels in which the Catalan higher education system is embedded and to provide a conceptualization based

on the relevant academic literature on the three areas of interest of this study, namely university autonomy, funding and quality as presented above. The aim, therefore, is to explain the ‘how’ and the ‘what’. The analytical framework approaches ‘how’ European level policy initiatives or agreements impact national (regional) level higher education policy making, while the ‘what’ is discussed through the conceptualisation of the three policy issues.

For this purpose, first we will discuss how there have been important governance shifts with respect to Spanish higher education moving power away from central government and relocating authority upwards (EU), downwards (regions and institutions) and sideways (public and private stakeholders), in the last decades. Creating an environment characterised by multi-level and multi-actor governance. This will provide a framework for the discussion on university autonomy, funding and quality as important issues in the overall development of higher education systems and of central interest for the European Union.

## 3.2 Analytical framework

In this section the overall analytical framework for the study will be presented. The overall focus will be on governance in general, and multi-level<sup>28</sup> and multi-actor governance together with an understanding of how policy processes filter from level to level. All this in addition to a particular focus on how policies are adopted, have been chosen as an appropriate framework to understand the synergies (or not) in the higher education policies between the three levels discussed above: European, Spanish and Catalan.

### 3.2.1 Governance shifts

In this first sub-section we will discuss the notion of governance and governance shifts and what these shifts imply for higher education.

The past two decades have been characterised by a destabilisation of the traditional governing mechanisms and a shift of governance arrangements (Enders et al., 2003; de Boer, forthcoming; Maassen, 2003; van Kersbergen and van Waarden, 2004). These happenings

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<sup>28</sup> Although the term used can indicate a hierarchical relationship between the different levels, in this study the term will be used to identify the different contexts without any hierarchical implications.

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have affected the private, semi-private and public policy arenas, and have involved local, regional, national, supra-national and global levels.

Governance is a concept used widely and by different disciplines, for which there is no clear consent on its exact meaning. Nevertheless, as van Kersbergen & van Waarden (2004:144) argue the definitions given to governance have some common traits. The approach to the concept is pluri-centric, networks play an important function, hierarchy or leadership is less important (or not present) and the overall emphasis is on the processes of governing and relations between actors posing specific risks or uncertainties. There are different definitions according to the focus of the issue at stake. In our case we will focus on higher education system (or external) governance (both at a regional and national level).

At the system level, Gallagher (2001:1) argues that governance ‘is the structure of relationships that bring about organisational coherence, authorise policies, plans and decisions, and accounts for their probity, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness’. From this definition Goedegebuure et al. (2008:2) maintain that governance can be seen as ‘a relational concept that includes leadership, management and administration, and, somewhat more implicitly, a sense of purpose and direction, in our case for higher education’.

Maassen (2003:34) asserts that governance shifts began around two decades ago and continue happening. He alleges that we are now in the second wave of governance reforms which underlie measuring performance and improving accountability of public institutions (quality) rather than the promotion of market mechanisms per se (Maassen, 2003).

Van Kersbergen & van Waarden (2004: 153) identify governance shifts vertically, horizontally and a mix of both. Regarding the higher education sector vertical shifts can be observed from national to supranational public bodies such as the European Union (EU), or from national to sub-national and regional levels, such as the regional governments in Spain (i.e. Catalonia<sup>29</sup>). Horizontally, shifts have taken place from public to semi-public or private forms of governance (i.e. outsourcing). There are also mixed combinations such as the horizontal-vertical shift in the rise of international semi-public or private accreditation agencies in areas such as business administration (Maassen, 2003).

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<sup>29</sup> In the previous chapter we saw how the Spanish government had shifted higher education competences to the regions.

Among the causes for these shifts are the overall economic/financial situation combined with the massification of higher education has changed policy styles, and a perceived dysfunction in higher education, provoking new governance mechanisms to increase effectiveness and efficiency (Enders et al., 2003:5).

A second argument for these developments is that internationalisation – and globalisation – trends are believed to lead to multi-level and multi-actor governance arrangements with a plurality of interests in the higher education context (van Kersbergen and van Waarden 2001, De Boer and Goedegebuure 2003, Maassen 2003, Beerkens 2008). According to Hooghe & Marks (2003:9) modern governance is and should be dispersed across multiple authority centres. Even though the term is multi-level, literally meaning multiple levels, often in the higher education context we refer to multiple forces, influences or pressures rather than a hierarchy of levels.

As van Kersbergen and van Waarden (2004:13) declare, a possible consequence of these governance shifts might be that traditional instruments for control of power may become less effective. In higher education, governments are shifting power to higher education institutions as well as to the regional governments. However, this increased autonomy goes hand in hand with a raise in accountability and performance reporting. Nevertheless, there are quite a few countries where the state is taking on a less prominent role, though still it remains a major player as principal funder and regulator. As Scott says ‘modern systems of higher education could not exist without the patronage of the national state’ (Scott, 1998:110).

In continental Europe, there is a discussion of the impact of the European Union (EU) on higher education and research policy. According to Scharpf (2001:20), governance in the European context is a complex multi-level institutional configuration that should be studied from a modular approach using a plurality of simpler concepts representing different modes of multi-level interaction that are characteristic of subsets of European policy processes. European integration raises attention to a development in which nation-states are seeking (new) regulatory powers on an international level and become more dependent on supranational directions due to a shift of powers to the European level (Scharpf, 2001). However, more than a shift in powers towards the European Commission, we would say that there is an increasing influence of the European Commission on national higher education policies. In this sense new modes of governance such as the Open Method of Coordination

(OMC) have been introduced as an alternative to ‘hard’ modes that could not be used easily in European level coordination (Olsen and Maassen, 2007: 8).

The OMC is understood as a new mode of governance, a ‘soft’<sup>30</sup> method featuring agreed-upon standards, goals, guidelines, benchmarks, ‘best practices’, indicators, monitoring arrangements, and time tables, allowing freedom to the member states to select how they meet the requirements. Some minor control takes place through processes of ‘blaming and shaming’ but there is no legal enforcement capacity (Olsen 2009:2). Decentralised decision-making with participation of different stakeholders is fostered through the OMC. In addition, the method is positively considered as flexible as it has not established procedures or guidelines. In this sense the European Union can be understood as an organised transfer platform (Gornitzka 2009:5). Participation in the OMC implies access to a wide range of information on the up-to-date activities of the EC, policy priorities and what is happening in the European national systems. The European OMC process for education<sup>31</sup> has made available systematic insights into the performances of the Member States’ education systems<sup>32</sup>. All this has laid the groundwork for mutual policy learning (Gornitzka 2009).

However, reforms and change in higher education are more likely to be accepted and adopted when the reforms and change policies are in line with the institutional and academic culture. As Gornitzka declares ‘(...) for organisations to change as a result of government initiatives a normative match is necessary, i.e. congruence between the values and beliefs underlying a proposed programme or policy and the identity and traditions of the organisation’ (Gornitzka, 1999:10).

Having underlined the notion of governance and introduced the conversation on the impact of the European Union in higher education, now we shall further develop the multi-level and multi-actor governance ideas arisen.

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<sup>30</sup> Soft law has been defined as the ‘rules of conduct that are not legally enforceable but nonetheless have a legal scope in that they guide the conduct of institutions, the member states and other policy participants’ (Wellens and Borchardt 1980:285, see also Snyder 1994, in Gornitzka 2009:28).

<sup>31</sup> Put into practice with the Education and Training 2010 programme.

<sup>32</sup> Member States write a progress reports that are then available to all the other participants.

### 3.2.2 Multi-level and multi-actor governance

Students of European integration define multi-level governance as the diffusion of authority and decision making (Hooghe and Marks, 2003:11). Multi-level governance entails a modified relationship between actors situated in different levels (i.e. supra-national, national, regional) where the distinction between the different levels is becoming less defined. Multi-level multi-actor governance implies that there are additional important stakeholders apart from the traditional ones. When using this term related to higher education, we could simplify its meaning by saying that it tries to take into account the whole span of actors and levels that have an effect on how the higher education sector operates.

De Boer (forthcoming) introduces a new dimension, namely research, by arguing that higher education and research systems are increasingly becoming intertwined, emerging into several dynamic and complex networks without a single dominating decision making entity<sup>33</sup>. He claims that we are facing ‘multi-actor, multi-level, multi-subject governance’. Because of this ‘multi-dimensionality’, governance seems a labyrinth: actors, institutions (rule structures) and levels can hardly be disentangled properly (de Boer, forthcoming).

Enders et al. (2003) claim that as multi-level governance is growing in acceptance it is increasing the interest in policy processes and the different layers of these policy processes. As a result it is necessary to understand how they interact and conflict, or not, with each other and how this may (or may not) influence the implementation process. Policy processes are now regarded to take place in a ‘multi-actor playing field’ which comes hand in hand with a re-definition of the role of the state. Some authors (Ferlie, Musselin & Andresani, in Goedegebuure, 2008) see the state’s role as ensuring the autonomy of higher education, as a mediator of societal interests orienting the development of higher education (‘the interventionist state’), or as stimulator of the strength of market forces as well as the detector, preventer and repair man of market failures. According to Enders et al. (2003) this translates into a more “hybrid” form of steering where stakeholders other than the state have a strong say. In consequence, policy processes are understood as interactive and dynamic processes in a multidimensional context (Enders et al., 2003).

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<sup>33</sup> This study will not go further into the higher education – research relationship, nevertheless, it must be taken into account as an important dimension in the current context.

The idea of the presence of a multiplicity of actors having a decisive role in higher education implies that policies become adaptable. In this sense we find that a key concept to understand the way in which European higher education policies and initiatives (i.e. Bologna Process) take place is through policy translation instead of diffusion (Gornitzka 2006:21). Diffusion imports a policy or structure and maintains it unchanged thus retaining its essential features even when adopted in a new system or context. On the contrary, translation signifies a process where policies and structures are affected by the context in which they are implemented, so the definition of problems or solutions may change. Gornitzka (2006:21-22) asserts that whether the ideas, policy problems and solutions that are represented are subject to either diffusion or translation is determined by the environment of the national higher education system. Environmental factors that can affect the diffusion or translation of policies from the European level can be administrative capacities and cultures, the role of organisational structure for how administrations secure information, communicate it and how it is linked to decision making (Gornitzka 2009). Moreover, some scholars state that what and how policies from other countries use, decide, translate or adopt will in turn modify the value of a policy for the others, either through defining reputational benefits (the adoption of a policy by another country creates a cultural norm)<sup>34</sup>, or through changing the terms of international competition<sup>35</sup> (Gornitzka 2009:32).

To sum up, higher education policies and initiatives at a European level form part of a multi-actor and multi-governance context in which forces, influences and pressures determine each higher education system in a way that conditions how these policies and initiatives are regarded and filtered. In turn, European policies are affected by the national higher education systems and their priorities; hence policies do not only ‘filter down’ from the European level, but can also ‘filter up’ from national systems. Scholars that focus on governance issues claim that today since higher education is under a multi-level multi-governance context, more stakeholders from both the same and different levels have a say on the development of universities. Because of this multi-dimensionality in the governance of higher education, it can be expected that a particular change or interest in one level may have a direct or indirect affect on the other levels. In addition, the ways policies are accepted, diffused, adopted and implemented depend upon the context (in our case the EU with the increasing role of the EC

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<sup>34</sup> A policy that is widely adopted will also include a wider and more established support team network of users (Gornitzka 2009:32)

<sup>35</sup> This process or mechanism is known as ‘adaptation to altered conditions’ (Gornitzka 2009:32).

and specifically through the OMC, the Spanish government and society and the Catalan regional government), the different regulatory frameworks and the specific beliefs and culture (especially the dominant academic values).

### 3.3 Literature review: university autonomy, funding and quality

This section presents both a conceptualisation and a theoretical discussion of the three areas of interest in this study: institutional autonomy (3.3.1.), funding (3.3.2.) and quality (3.3.3.).

The main reason for selecting these three aspects of higher education is their recurrent appearance in current European, national and regional policies. Firstly and regarding institutional or university autonomy it appears at the top of the list both in the Modernisation Agenda and in the *Estrategia Universidad 2015*. According to Mora (2007) university autonomy is one of the most important questions that the Spanish higher education system is facing at the moment. Institutional autonomy is understood as one of the pillars necessary for universities to be innovative, to respond and adapt to the needs of society and to be accountable for their internal organisation and their financial resources. A related issue that will be looked into more closely under this assumption is accountability. In essence this issue represents a shift in authority/responsibility with regards to higher education from the state to the institutions<sup>36</sup>.

Secondly higher education funding is vital for institutional development and different funding mechanisms can have very different outcomes. It is also on the list of changes considered necessary in the Modernisation Agenda of the EC and included in the *Estrategia Universidad 2015* and in the *White Paper of the University of Catalonia*. Funding represents a shift in the public - private balance in the funding of higher education<sup>37</sup>.

Finally quality is a notion that is present in all higher education activities, whether research, teaching, learning or management activities. It is also a contested notion linked to accountability and often viewed as a “new” way of State regulation or re-regulation (De Boer and Goedegebuure 2003). The concept is also linked to the notions of excellence,

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<sup>36</sup> Further discussed in chapter 2 (Setting the context) and 4 (Analysis).

<sup>37</sup> Further discussed in chapter 2 (Setting the context) and 4 (Analysis).



efficiency and competitiveness. The higher the quality standards the more competitive higher education institutions are perceived. Quality is also present in a transversal manner in many EU policy documents as well as in the *Estrategia Universidad 2015* and the *White Paper of the University of Catalonia*. With respect to quality we see a shift from institution controlled quality assessment mechanisms to externally controlled accreditation schemes<sup>38</sup>.

Above all, these three aspects are tightly interrelated with other concepts such as accountability, effectiveness and efficiency. Because of this intertwinement the conditions and changes of one aspect will most likely have an effect on the conditions of the others. This interrelationship will be taken into account in the following discussion.

### **3.3.1 University autonomy**

The central questions to be addressed in this section concerns university autonomy. What does university autonomy mean? What indicators are used to measure university autonomy? What issues arise from the autonomy discussion in higher education?

#### *What is university autonomy?*

In first instance, we will discuss the different attributions to autonomy as there have been numerous definitions and many include slightly different indicators. Like Olsen (2009:4) says, ‘there is no agreement on the precise meaning or scope definition of autonomy; neither is there an agreement on the processes through which, and the conditions under which, autonomy is achieved, maintained or lost, or upon which normative and principles of organisational internal governance should be based’.

Nevertheless, Olsen (2009:5) provides a general definition of ‘autonomy’ and considers the term to mean ‘self-governance and not being subject to the external influence of any person, institution, state or supranational entity’.

Initially, and as a response to authoritarianisms, university autonomy was understood as academic freedom, freedom for professors and researchers to teach and research according to their own interests and independently from authority objectives (Bricall 2000)<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Further discussed in chapter 2 (setting the context) and 4 (analysis).

<sup>39</sup> This notion acquired a strong political dimension and is particularly present in countries with authoritarian regimes, such as Spain and Greece, and hence appears in the Spanish first post-regime Constitution in 1978 as a fundamental right.

Another slightly different definition was used already in the 1960s and is as follows: ‘a workable twentieth century definition of institutional autonomy [is] the absence of dependence upon a single or narrow base of support’ (Babbidge and Rosenzweig 1962:158 in Clark 1998:7).

Even so, today university autonomy is seen with a broader understanding and includes elements such as the ability to (Stichweh 1994 in Felt 2001:13):

- Make independent decisions on the limits of institutional commitment in certain topics and areas;
- Set up a value system and define forms of capital, which structure the field and allow scientists to advance;
- Decide on the criteria of access to the institutions, both at the level of scientists and students;
- Define strategic tasks and set institutional aims;
- Determine the links to other fields in society which are seen as crucial for further development (e.g. politics, economics etc.);
- Assume responsibility for the decisions taken and possible effects on society.

This last point relates university autonomy to social responsibility and accountability. That is to say, it refers to the need for higher education institutions to be responsible for the decisions taken and their effects on society calls directly to accountability mechanisms by which universities ‘explain’ their activities to society (Felt 2001).

The list above seems to also point out how autonomy can or could be measured in the context of higher education. In that sense, the EUA in its current project surveying the autonomy of European universities is using the following elements to measure the degree of autonomy<sup>40</sup>:

- Academic matters (deciding on degree supply, curriculum and methods of teaching; deciding on areas, scope, aims, and methods of research).

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<sup>40</sup> See references for link to EUA.

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- Financial issues (acquiring and allocating funding, deciding on tuition fees, accumulating surplus: see the financial autonomy index set up by EUA).
  - Organisational structures (setting the university structures and statutes, making contracts, electing decision-making bodies and persons).
  - Staffing policies (responsibility for recruitment, salaries and promotion).

The OECD in its Education Policy Analysis (2003) uses a similar but slightly different set of indicators to measure the extent of autonomy experienced by universities, in other words, the aspects that determine the autonomy of a specific university:

- Own their buildings and equipment
- Borrow funds
- Spend budgets to achieve objectives
- Set academic structure/course content
- Employ and dismiss academic staff
- Set salaries
- Decide size of student enrolment
- Decide level of tuition fees

De Boer and File (2009) go a step further and add additional indicators that should be taken into account when analysing university autonomy creating thus a more thorough notion of university autonomy. The aspects they have taken into account, in addition to the OECD ones, are:

- The legal obligation to produce a strategic plan for the university which outlines main strategic objectives.
- The ability to determine their own internal governance structures.
- The ability to determine research programmes and major research themes within the university.
- The requirement to have internal quality evaluation systems for research and teaching.
- The requirement to take part in external quality evaluation systems for research and teaching.

- The freedom to enter partnerships with other organisations and higher education institutions.
- The requirement to report upon their activities and/or performance.
- The freedom to select students.
- The freedom to decide on the internal allocation of public and private funds.

Using the different state steering models developed by Olsen (1988), and applied by Gornitzka and Maassen (2000) for higher education, a chart in which university autonomy is linked to these different models is presented in table 3.1.

*Table 3.1 State models related to autonomy*

<b>The sovereign, rationality-bounded State model</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State control</li> <li>• Accountability to political authorities</li> <li>• Assessment based on political effectiveness</li> <li>• Centralised decision making</li> <li>• Change in HE follows political change</li> </ul> <i>Autonomy of the university: if government is overloaded then technical decisions can be left to the organisation</i>	<b>The institutional model</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tradition based</li> <li>• Policy arena dominated by institutional leaders</li> <li>• Decision making is traditionalist and specialised</li> <li>• Assessment criteria: effects on the structure of meanings and norms</li> </ul> <i>Autonomy of the university is based on shared norms of non-interference</i>
<b>The corporate-pluralistic State</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities challenge the monopoly of power and control through the State</li> <li>• Decision making is negotiated and takes place after consultation</li> <li>• Actors in policy making pursue their institution's interest</li> <li>• Societal participation through organised interest groups</li> <li>• Government interference depends on negotiations with other forces present</li> </ul> <i>Autonomy of the university is negotiated and a result of the distribution of interests and power.</i>	<b>The supermarket State</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal role of the State and other public bodies</li> <li>• Universities deliver services</li> <li>• Assessment criteria: efficiency, economic flexibility and survival</li> <li>• Dominant organisational form: corporation in a competitive market</li> <li>• Change depends very much on the environment</li> <li>• Little direct interference by the government</li> </ul> <i>Autonomy of the university depends on institutional ability to survive</i>

Source: Gornitzka and Maassen (2000).

From all the above discussed, it can be asserted that autonomy is a multidimensional and contested aspect of higher education that can be understood under two perspectives (Berdahl et al. 1971:1010 in Ordorika 2003:362):

- Substantive autonomy as the power of the university in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programs.
- Procedural autonomy as the power of the university to determine the means by which its goals and programs will be pursued.

According to Olsen, however, the term may be more useful as a vehicle for political purposes (Olsen 2008:5) than as an analytical tool for comprehending the dynamics of contemporary higher education. Precisely due to this ‘autonomy’ can be understood as a useful term because it carries positive connotations and at the same time is ambiguous and leaves room for alternative interpretations (Olsen 2008:7).

As Felt (2001:14) argues, even if autonomy is granted to a university by law, it requires certain structures and procedures within the universities which enable these institutions to exert this autonomy. Therefore autonomy is central to the concept of governance. Clark, in his article *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities; Organizational Pathways of Transformation* (1998), reflects upon institutional autonomy of universities. According to him an increase in university autonomy does not guarantee universities being active, for they may ‘live for the past rather than look to the future and they may be satisfied with what they have become and do not wish for more’ (Clark 1998:5). For autonomy to be an effective mechanism to make universities pro-active and competitive institutions have to have a few basic entrepreneurial components: a strengthened steering core; an expanded developmental periphery; a diversified funding base; a stimulated academic heartland; and an integrated entrepreneurial culture. What is more, Clark goes on to say that the ‘new’ autonomy is different from the ‘old’ one. In the past, public universities could be given large autonomy and mostly left to carry out their functions without control mainly because the number of people participating in higher education was small, and the amount of public funds invested in universities did not reach the priority level. With the massification in the twentieth century and its correspondent increase of public funding expenditure, virtually everyone (stakeholders) can demand some involvement or relationship. Clark alleges that today universities have relatively spoken less money but have to do more, they have to maintain the knowledge heritage and at the same time they have to be quick and flexible in the

production of new knowledge and in doing all this have to respond to everyone's demands since they are 'all' stakeholders.

Institutional autonomy is present in the recent policy reforms and is set as a constant objective both at the EU level and the national and regional ones as seen in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, even though these changes may lead to an increase in the degree of freedom, in decision making the changes can also cause deterioration in freedom of movement at other levels. Consequently, it is essential not only to understand the formal level of autonomy but also to pay more attention to the informal mechanisms that are at work and to those areas that are less evidently regulated (Felt 2001:5).

### *Autonomy vs accountability*

Accountability is a term closely linked to university autonomy as well as to funding and quality (as we shall see in the following sections). Governments may give more autonomy to universities to manage themselves and to take decisions, but that does not directly imply that they do not demand and expect the institutions to be responsible for their activities and to account for them to society. Neither does it mean that they take a step back and cease to regulate the sector, or on the contrary. Thus often, if not always, institutional autonomy comes hand in hand with a set of accountability measures and funding arrangements. Felt (2001:13) alleges that as universities obtain more autonomy, they at the same time agree to implement accountability and external quality assurance procedures.

### **3.3.2 Higher education funding**

In this section we will discuss some funding mechanisms and look into some of the most debated issues that arise from these such as the efficiency vs. equity dilemma and the efficiency and effectiveness dichotomy.

Higher education funding includes the way in which resources are allocated to the production of higher education services, the distribution of these services and its effects among the population (Mora and Vila 2003).

Funding is considered as one of the most central factors of influence regarding university autonomy (Felt 2001). Being able to allocate funds as best considered as well as to generate revenues from different sources provides institutions with the liberty to decide what activities are most important for them. In Clark's analysis on entrepreneurial universities

(1998) he alleges that a 'diversified funding base' provides more freedom for institutions to decide upon their actions and become less dependent on state regulations and funding. While increasing income from non-governmental streams and so creating a base of diversified funding sources, universities enhance the opportunity to make noteworthy moves without waiting for system wide enactments that usually come slowly and bring along standardizing rules attached (Clark 1998).

According to Jongbloed and Van der Knoop (1999:141) in the past decades, not only the level of public funds allocated to higher education institutions has undergone substantial changes, but also the criteria of allocation have constantly been subject to reforms and policy changes executed by governments all over the world. These changes in the criteria for allocation of resources have arisen due to many reasons. Gornitzka et al. (2004) relate these changes to an increased focus on managerialism or what Neave calls the rise of the evaluative state (Neave 1988 in Gornitzka, et al. 2004:1). Both ideas have as a common denominator the growing lack of trust in the work and function of higher education, and more emphasis increased accountability. In Europe these trends have meant an augment of freedom of decision and actuation for the institutions although linked to a heavier accountability system and a more rigid set of output objectives (Gornitzka, et al. 2004:1). Two trends in relation to this are the emergence of performance-based funding and the introduction of market-type elements. Both of these are intended to stimulate productivity, cost awareness, innovativeness and responsiveness in the higher education sector. Also, they come hand in hand with deregulation and decentralisation policies (Jongbloed and Van der Knoop 1999:142).

The way the funds are distributed and the conditions which surround this allocation have an impact on the efficiency of institutional funding. Hybrid funding mechanisms are often used to balance the role of the actors. These mechanisms consist in fixed and variable allocations. The fixed component serves to guarantee capacity independent of student enrolment and the performance based component (variable) stimulates efficiency in educational production (Canton and Venniker 2001:44).

According to Albrecht and Ziderman (in Jongbloed, 2000:17) there are basically four resource allocation mechanisms: negotiated, input-based, student-based and output-based. These models, in practice, may be found simultaneously forming hybrid mechanisms.

Negotiated funding is the most popular mechanism (Jongbloed, 2000:17). Allocations are based on the previous year's resources and are the outcome of negotiations between the higher education institutions representatives' and the competent authorities of the state (Ministry of Education, funding council, etc.). Normally negotiations begin with budget proposals/requests from the institutions.

In the second mechanism, input-based funding, the allocations are designed according to the measurement of the costs of higher education (i.e. staff salaries, student enrolments, and infrastructure and maintenance costs). Funding is either on a line item basis (each expenditure item is approved on the basis of norms) or on a formulae basis (budget is derived from multiplying enrolments, for example, by a parameter of unit cost) (Jongbloed 2000:17). These two mechanisms do not encourage institutions to be more efficient or responsive to changing external demands.

Student-based funding is characterised by the allocation of the resources via the students instead of the institutions. Student choice becomes the key element in this system as they can 'vote with their feet' (Jongbloed 2000:18). It is also known as voucher system or quality-based funding mechanism. Students are awarded a voucher normally by the government representing a number of years, months or units of education. This voucher can be cashed in at the institution of their choice. In contrast to the input-based system, the number and type of students entitled to a voucher is determined by the government, as well as the liberty of institutions to differentiate themselves pricewise, to use the resources as they consider best and to control their enrolments (Jongbloed 2000:18).

Finally, output- or performance-based budgeting is defined by Canton and van der Meer (2001:86) as the allocation of resources contingent on an output-indicator. The important pros of output-based budgeting are that it promotes efficiency, it is a means of transparent allocation of public funding and there are no requirements on production technology imposed (Canton and van der Meer 2001:86). Nonetheless performance-based budgeting may sometimes be problematic on the measurement of the outputs. Measurement can lead to misalignment of incentives and 'cream-skimming' (the output-target is met but other aspects of output are ignored). Also, output-based funding will not work correctly under some conditions, for instance, when individuals do not have (enough) control over the performance measures or cultures dominated by professional norms that denigrate speed and quantity of output relative to the quality, challenge, elegance, thoroughness, creativity or



subtlety of the work done (Canton and van der Meer 2001:86). Performance-based budgeting is said to be effective only when efficiency-gains do not flow back to the government, but can be used by the institutions on their own discretion (Hendrikse, 1998 in Canton and van der Meer 2001:86).

There are few countries which apply this performance mechanism, among them a few of the Nordic countries and some regions in Spain, namely Valencia and Catalonia. In the countries or regions that do apply this mechanism the allocations are decided either by formulae (budgets derived from multiplying output measures by a tariff) or contracts (where the institutions and the higher education institutions agree on the type and levels of output produced and the compensation received by the institutions) (Jongbloed 2000:17). These two last mechanisms include incentives for institutions to become more efficient by using the resources in the best possible way and responsive to changes in the environment by adapting to the labour and student market demands. They also introduce the important market element of competition between institutions (Jongbloed 2000:17).

### *Efficiency vs. Equity*

Barr (2003:322) defines allocative (or external) efficiency as the totality of resources devoted to tertiary education and also the division of resources between the different parts of tertiary education and, within higher education, their division between subjects and universities, and between spending on universities and on student support. On the other hand, internal efficiency relates to factors such as the quality of university management. In addition, Barr (2003:322) states that specific efficiency aims of higher education include the efficient size of the sector, the efficient quality, and the efficient subject mix to maximise student satisfaction, meet the needs of employers and maximise national economic performance. Gornitzka and Maassen (2000:227-228), on the other hand define efficiency as the ‘aspects that refer to whether the institutions are doing what they are doing in the best possible (most cost-efficient way)’. Thus efficiency relates to the optimal level and use of resources.

Equity, on the other hand is defined as a form of equality of opportunity (Barr 2003:322). Therefore, as the more relevant equity aim, access to higher education, should be based only on the person’s ability and interests, regardless of the social class, ethnic origin or gender. It is also understood as a fair share of the cost of higher education among the beneficiaries of the service (Mora and Vila 2003). Improved access contributes to equity as well as to

efficiency, as it minimises the waste of talent (Barr 2003:322). Hence, the goal of any government is to achieve a balance between the maximum efficiency possible while guaranteeing equity for its population. Governments try to assure an appropriate balance between equity and efficiency through the design of the funding mechanisms.

### *Efficiency vs. effectiveness*

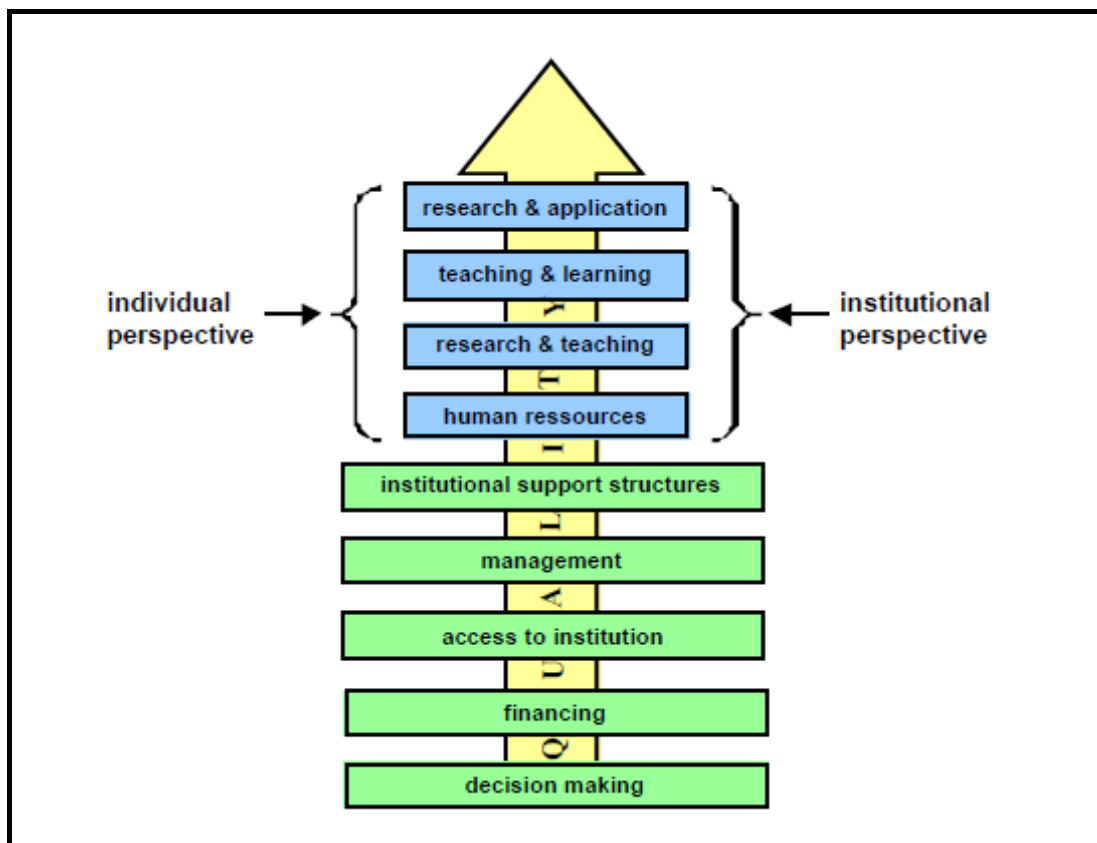
As mentioned above, Gornitzka and Maassen (2000:227-228) define efficiency as the aspects that refer to whether the institutions are doing what they are doing in the best possible (most cost-efficient way). In addition they comprehend effectiveness as concerning whether the institutions are doing what they are supposed to do. Efficiency relates to cost (value for money), while effectiveness relates to complying with their function (quality included in this equation). The efficiency vs. effectiveness dilemma is related to the external dimension of higher education, its relation to society, specifically its economic expectations and demands (Gornitzka and Maassen 2000:227-228). The dilemma can be identified in that often funding systems focus on output factors (efficiency) but are not linked with the evaluative schemes which are fixed on effectiveness (quality) (Gornitzka, et al. 2004). Some academics (Gornitzka, et al. 2004) propose as a possible solution in the Nordic countries the funding contracts, which are also implemented in Catalonia. However, other academics see the solution in New Public Management (Calvo-Mora 2006) which should provide more efficiency (decrease costs) and increase effectiveness.

### **3.3.3 Quality in higher education**

In this section we will discuss the complexity of the notion of quality in higher education and its also complicated relation to accountability.

Quality is an issue that has become in recent times transversal to all university activities (see figure 3.3) below. Creating extensive quality monitoring procedures both internally and externally is a tool as well as a possible condition for the enlargement of institutional autonomy (Felt 2001:12). We equally find quality procedures in management, teaching and research actions. In this figure, Felt (2001:12) explains the internal structure of a university and how quality is present transversally.

Figure 3.2 The presence of quality in the internal structure of the university



Source: Felt 2001:12.

In addition, quality has become an ever present policy objective related often to excellence and competitiveness as well as to accountability and social responsibility.

### *What does quality mean in higher education?*

Like autonomy quality is a multifaceted and loosely defined concept. Many academics (Stensaker 2007; and Westerheijden 2004; among others) have confronted this question. They have identified a plurality of understandings for quality in higher education: value, conformance to specifications or requirements, fitness for use, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation and evaluation among even more definitions.

The EUA in its Quality Culture Report (2006) invited the networks participating in the project to define the concept giving a list of possibilities which strongly resembles the definitions discussed by Stensaker and Westerheijden. Thus we find quality understood as: compliance (zero errors), fitness for purpose, customer satisfaction, excellence, value for money, transformation, enhancement and quality as control.

Despite presenting its features defining quality is a complex task. In this work the alternative chosen to overcome this issue is to be pragmatic and open to include different approaches of quality. As the aim of the study is to analyse the relations between the European policies and the national and regional ones, quality will be understood in its broadest meaning including all the features outlined before.

An issue directly related to the difficulty in defining quality is how to capture the effect of quality in higher education. Since it is difficult to define quality it is equally complicated to find the causal links and know how findings should be interpreted (Stensaker 2007). As Westerheijden (2004) puts it, it is like a mobile target which, when you think you have caught it, it unexpectedly moves and you have to start all over again.

### *Improvement vs accountability*

Who sets and determines the quality schemes, value systems and the rules on which these schemes are based upon? The value systems used in the quality procedures become engrained into the processes and eventually given for granted (Felt 2001:13). According to Winkler (EUA 2006:4), one of the most important discussions on quality is if the purpose of the external evaluations is to improve the activities or they are there to serve as accountability measures. He alleges that to do both at the same time is very complicated. In any case, the introduction of internal quality mechanisms provides a crucial balance to the requirements of external accountability. In addition, quality culture can serve to improve institutions while external evaluation procedures can serve to provide the required accountability to the public (EUA 2006).

Taking the European, Spanish and Catalan policies and initiatives mentioned in chapter 2 in consideration, a lot of effort is being put on quality evaluation schemes. The general discourse at a national and regional level highlights the importance of constant improvement in higher education institutions. The visible outcomes are the creation of internal, regional and national quality mechanisms and the public reports with the results of the evaluations. However, how much actually improves at the basic unit level is something that is still to be studied.

The Spanish and Catalan major policy documents, when referring to quality, refer to the notion that higher education institutions should be accountable to society. There is also an intrinsic belief that these institutions are working for society, hence they must be accountable

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to it as society is its main funding source<sup>41</sup>. Their existence is not justified in itself but rather in the fact that universities depend upon their contribution to society to continue existing.

The division between accountability and improvement is very relative. According to Gornitzka, et al. (2004) accountability and improvement are elements that can be combined in an integrated process, and are not contradictory per se.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter has aimed at providing an analytical framework based on the notions of multi-level and multi-actor governance systems with special emphasis on how European level policies and agreements can impact national and regional higher education policy making and offering a literature review on the three core policy issues of higher education today: university autonomy, funding and quality.

On the one hand, higher education policies and initiatives at a European level form part of a multi-actor and multi-governance context in which forces, influences and pressures determine each higher education system in a way that conditions how these policies and initiatives are adopted. Since nowadays higher education is under a multi-level multi-governance context, more stakeholders from both the same and different levels have a say on the development of universities. Because of this multi-dimensionality in the governance of higher education, it can be expected that a particular change or interest in one level, be it European, national or regional, may have a direct or indirect affect on the other levels.

On the other hand, university autonomy, funding and quality are three of the most debated areas of higher education in recent times. University autonomy and quality are multidimensional concepts difficult to pin down, while funding is a crucial aspect in the relationship between State and the higher education sector. These aspects, as seen in this chapter, are intertwined, meaning that a change in one will most probably signify a modification of the other aspects. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind the extent to which the shifts in these three core policy issues ‘fit’ the dominant academic values in Spain and particularly in Catalonia. Given that universities as loosely coupled organisations are in general successful in resisting external change initiatives that do not fit the academic basic

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<sup>41</sup> Further discussed in chapter 4.

set of values. This implies that the greatest 'match' between European, national and regional levels can be expected in areas where the lower levels can make the relevant policy decisions, and where these decisions can be expected to match the academic value system. With regards to the three policy issues at stake in this study, this signifies that the highest chance of a policy match can be assumed to be with autonomy, while the funding shift can only to a limited extent be influenced by the public authorities, and quality is a sensitive issue where public authorities usually have to be careful when they enter or touch upon the academic responsibilities with respect to the quality of their basic activities.

## **4. An analysis of European, Spanish and Catalan policies on university autonomy, funding and quality**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As discussed in chapter 2, in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy (2000), universities are considered as central actors for European integration, for the success of the European knowledge economy and society. According to the EC, further growth of the knowledge society depends on the production, transmission, and dissemination of new knowledge through education and training, information and communication technologies and through new industrial processes or services (EC 2003b). In these processes, higher education institutions have a key role to play in education and training, in research and exploitation of its results, in spin-off and cooperation with the industry sector and in their contribution to local and regional development. Based on the above arguments, and also expressed in the goals set out by the European Council in Lisbon (2000), the EC considers it necessary that European universities modernise and become more efficient and effective and strive for excellence. To achieve the overall improvement and modernisation of the EHEA that the EC is promoting, each of the national systems of higher education are strongly encouraged to work with the same objectives in mind. How to involve the countries in this process? How to engage each country to work for the same objectives? These questions have been tackled by the EC and it has found ways to accomplish such an endeavour with the disadvantage of not having any formal competence in higher education. As discussed in the previous chapter (3), the OMC was designed precisely for this purpose, allowing enough space for countries to adopt or translate policies in their own way.

Apart from the EC, there are other important stakeholders in the European-level higher education policy arena. Just to mention some, we find the EUA, as a representative of the institutional voice of the European universities, the Council of Europe, as representative of the 47 European countries, ENQA as the European network for quality agencies, industry and business representatives and student representative organisations. All these stakeholders, together with the actors at the national and regional levels, form the multi-level multi-actor governance framework introduced in the previous chapter. In this context it can be expected

that events and changes at a supra-national level (i.e. EU) may impact to some extent the national and regional policy developments.

In the Spanish and in particular in the Catalan case, there have been numerous references to the EU policies and recommendations when introducing changes, passing new laws or creating policies. Nevertheless, when talking about university autonomy, funding and quality, all three included in European policies and recommendations, the priorities given to each, and the way in which they are translated to the national and regional spheres, vary considerably.

The reasons behind this variability and the difference in priorities between the three policy issues could have many explanations. For instance, the degree of articulation between the national and regional regulations, the efficiency of a certain actor or agency, the incentives provided by the EC for a particular issue, the alignment between the European objective and national or regional objectives, among many others. We will not focus on finding the reasons behind the variety between the three aspects we are going to analyse, but rather we will centre the attention on understanding what the dynamics are behind each of them.

Recalling the three assumptions presented at the commencement of the study:

- a) Related to changes in the dominant policy views on the role of the state with respect to higher education in Europe, higher education policies in Spain (Catalonia) have progressively increased university autonomy.*
- b) Related to shifts in the dominant policy views on the public-private balance in the funding of higher education in Europe, higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have increased and diversified their funding resources.*
- c) In relation to the a shift in the internal-external control balance with respect to intra-institutional quality assessment of higher education in Europe, higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have been increasingly stimulated by the national and regional authorities to accept the use of external quality assessment and accreditation mechanisms.*

This chapter is subdivided in three parts. First it presents a timeline with the major European, Spanish and Catalan policies and initiatives (4.2). Then it sets the stage for the analysis of the assumptions (4.3). Finally, the overall conclusions are discussed (4.4).



## 4.2 A step back: the wider picture

Multi-level and multi-actor governance means, as explained in chapter 3, that there is a multiplicity of actors and levels<sup>42</sup> in which higher education regulations, policies, initiatives are created and implemented. Before entering the discussion on each of the three assumptions we have considered necessary to present the different initiatives and policies separated in three dimensions: Europe (supra-national), Spain (national) and Catalonia (regional).

The international dimension ('outside' Europe) is, most certainly, influential. World Bank and OECD reports, the advancements of the North American higher education system as the main competitor for Europe, the leagues of university rankings, the World Trade Organisation/GATS negotiations concerning trade in higher education, among other international initiatives have repercussions at European, Spanish and Catalan levels. Nevertheless, since the objective of the research are the relations between the European and the national and regional levels in the field of higher education, the international dimension will not be included in the time-line presented and the overall analysis.

The following time-line presents the major initiatives and policies regarding higher education in Europe (whether promoted by the EC or by major stakeholders), in Spain and Catalonia. A very brief summary of the main points or objectives emphasised in the initiatives and policies is depicted. Special attention is paid to the issues of autonomy, funding and quality.

*Table 4.1 Major policy developments in Europe, Spain and Catalonia*

Year	Europe	Spain	Catalonia
1983		<b>University Reform Act (LRU)</b> - more university autonomy (own programmes and curricula, lump sum funding allocations and wider capability to distribute it internally) - professors 'belong' to universities (not to the State) - responsibility for universities transferred to regional governments	

<sup>42</sup> Please let it be reminded that the term 'level' in this study does not imply a hierarchical relationship.

Year	Europe	Spain	Catalonia
1988	<b>Magna Charta Universitatum</b> (Europe and beyond, 400 Rectors) Ideals promoted: university moral and intellectual autonomy (academic freedom), teaching and research as inseparable and cooperation across political and cultural borders (beyond Europe).		
1993	<b>Establishment of the European Union (Treaty of Maastricht)</b> Higher education not a priority area and competences are left to nation states.		
1996			Foundation of <b>Catalan Quality Agency (AQU)</b>
1997	<b>Treaty of Amsterdam</b> Article 149 on education and vocational training: exclusion of the 'harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states'.		Introduction of new funding arrangements: contract programmes based on negotiated objectives
1998	<b>Sorbonne Declaration</b> (4 countries) - Universities as central role in developing European cultural dimensions. - EHEA as key to promote citizen's mobility		
1999	<b>Bologna Declaration</b> (Ministers of Education) (29 members) - Increasing international competitiveness of European HE - Greater compatibility and comparability of systems - Consolidate the EHEA - 6 objectives (actions): easy readable and comparable degrees; systems based on two main cycles; system of credits (ECTS); increase mobility; quality assurance; promotion of European dimension.		
2000	<b>Lisbon Treaty</b> (European Council, 27 countries) Overall objective: <i>"the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth"</i>	<b>Report Universidad 2000</b> (Commissioned by the CRUE and written by Bricall) Provides a reflection on the current changes and challenges that Spanish universities are facing. Major themes approached:	

Year	Europe	Spain	Catalonia
	<p><i>with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010"</i></p> <p>Emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key role of universities (education and research) in the European knowledge economy and society</li> <li>- Need to increase performance and public expenditure on research (3% GDP) and higher education (2% GDP)</li> </ul> <p>Creation of <b>European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The university as a social agent</li> <li>- Transmission of knowledge</li> <li>- Knowledge production and application</li> <li>- Funding</li> <li>- University staff</li> <li>- Quality and accreditation</li> <li>- Governance and administration</li> <li>- Technology and university networks</li> </ul>	
2001	<p><b>Prague Communiqué</b> (33 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment to EHEA by 2010</li> <li>- Involvement of the EU</li> <li>- Structure to the follow-up work: follow-up group and preparatory group.</li> <li>- 3 new objectives: importance of lifelong learning, involvement of institutions and students in the process (EUA and ESIB invited), attractiveness of EHEA internally and externally.</li> </ul>	<p><b>University Act (LOU)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incorporation of (some) external representatives in the running of university</li> <li>- Election of rector by direct vote</li> <li>- Rise of academic staff representation (and decrease of student representation)</li> <li>- National qualification requirement for academics</li> <li>- Post hoc accreditation to study programmes by (ANECA)</li> </ul>	<p><b>For a new university model</b> (Report by the Commission on the Reflection of the Future of the Catalan University System)</p> <p>Detects three major areas where reform is needed: governance, staff and student policies, and funding. Specific recommendations are given for each area.</p>
2002		Establishment of <b>National Quality and Accreditation Agency (ANECA)</b>	
2003	<p><b>Berlin Communiqué</b> (40 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on the social dimension</li> <li>- Doctoral research as 3rd cycle</li> <li>- Priorities for 2005: quality assurance, two-cycle degree structure and recognition of degrees (diploma supplement)</li> <li>- New objective (total of 10): role of research and networks at the doctoral level.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge</b> (EC)</p> <p>Emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellence</li> <li>- the need for sufficient funding (and efficient use)</li> <li>- Academic and managerial autonomy</li> <li>- Contribution to local and regional needs</li> </ul>	<p>Policy document (Ministry of Education)</p> <p><b>Integration of the Spanish higher education system in the EHEA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explains the Ministry's position on the implementation of the EHEA in the Spanish higher education system (main challenges and possible solutions, in addition to a set of guidelines and the role/responsibility of the institutions).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Catalan University Act (LUC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on quality and excellence</li> <li>- Respect to university autonomy</li> <li>- Sets the general framework and vision of the Catalan Higher Education System</li> </ul>

Year	Europe	Spain	Catalonia
	<p><b>Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe</b> (EC)</p> <p>Emphasis on the need for substantial increase in human resources investment to reach the Lisbon Goals.</p>		
2004			
2005	<p><b>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</b> (ENQA in cooperation with EUA, ESIB and EURASHE)</p> <p>Sets the standards of internal and external quality evaluation of higher education institutions as well as cyclical evaluations of the agencies.</p> <p>The main objective is to improve the overall quality across the EHEA with consistent standards.</p> <p><b>Bergen Communiqué</b> (45 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stocktaking exercise (half-term)</li> <li>- Priorities for 2007: link HE and research, social dimension, mobility, external dimension.</li> <li>- Adoption and promotion of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ENQA document)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: Enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy</b> (EC)</p> <p>Emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality and excellence</li> <li>- Increasing and diversifying funding</li> <li>- Governance (de-regulation to allow university reforms)</li> </ul>		
2006	<p><b>Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research And Innovation</b> (European Commission)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Break down the barriers around universities in Europe.</li> <li>- Ensure real autonomy and accountability for universities.</li> <li>- Provide incentives for structured partnerships with the business community.</li> <li>- Provide the right mix of skills and competences for the labour</li> </ul>		

Year	Europe	Spain	Catalonia
	<p>market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduce the funding gap and make funding work more effectively in education and research.</li> <li>- Enhance interdisciplinary and transdisciplinarity.</li> </ul> <p>Activate knowledge through interaction with society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reward Excellence at the highest level.</li> <li>- Make the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area more visible and attractive in the world.</li> </ul> <p><b>Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems</b> (EC)</p> <p>Emphasis on efficiency and equity aspects of higher education funding.</p>		
2007	<p><b>London Communiqué</b> (46 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Move towards student-centred, outcome-based learning</li> <li>- Adoption of strategy "EHEA in a global setting"</li> <li>- Priorities for 2009: mobility, social dimension, data collection, employability, global dimension, (qualitative) stocktaking</li> </ul> <p><b>The Lisbon Declaration. Europe's Universities beyond 2010: Diversity with a Common Purpose</b> (EUA)</p> <p>Emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building the EHEA</li> <li>- Internationalisation of EHEA</li> <li>- Promoting research and innovation</li> <li>- Quality</li> <li>- Autonomy and funding</li> </ul>	<p><b>Modification of LOU University Act: LOMLOU</b></p> <p>Justification for the modifications of the previous law due to EU promotion of higher education and research</p> <p>Emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- University autonomy, modernisation of universities and the need to create the appropriate conditions for the Spanish higher education system to operate (harmonic articulation between national regulations, regional competences and university autonomy).</li> </ul> <p><b>Spanish University Funding</b> (Consejo de Coordinación Universitaria, Comisión de Financiación)</p> <p>Emphasis on: the need to increase funding for higher education and research to achieve the overall aim of being more competitive and fully integrated in the EHEA.</p>	
2008		<p><b>Estrategia Universidad 2015</b> (Ministry of Science and Innovation)</p> <p>Main objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define the mission and basic functions of Spanish universities in the current context, as well as the new role of public universities as a public service promoter of higher university education and knowledge generation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>White Paper of the University of Catalonia</b> (8 public universities, bottom-up initiative)</p> <p>Emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment to society, democratic values and the Catalan culture</li> <li>- Quality education, focusing on it students and integrated in the European Higher Education Area</li> </ul>

Year	Europe	Spain	Catalonia
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop university education, fulfilling all quality and social criteria, in the context of the European setting and the knowledge society.</li> <li>- Increase research capacity and its impact on Spain's progress, wellbeing and competitiveness.</li> <li>- Improve the abilities of universities to meet the country's social and economic needs and to boost cultural vitality and human progress.</li> <li>- Improve the competitiveness of Spanish universities in Europe and increase their international visibility and scope.</li> <li>- Increase university funding on the basis of objectives and projects, introducing better policies on student scholarships, grants and loans.</li> <li>- Increase each university's autonomy and degree of specialisation, as well as their accountability to society.</li> <li>- Support the professional development and social recognition of university staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research-intensive universities</li> <li>- Role of universities in development, innovation and welfare</li> <li>- Internationalisation and European dimension</li> <li>- Higher education as service to society (equity)</li> <li>- Broad institutional autonomy and accountability</li> <li>- Good governance system and efficient management</li> <li>- Suitable target- and project-based funding model (sufficiency, efficiency and effectiveness)</li> </ul>
2009	<b>Leuven i Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué</b> (46 countries) Priorities for 2020: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social dimension of higher education (equity)</li> <li>- Integration in higher education systems of Lifelong learning programmes</li> <li>- Employability of students</li> <li>- Learning based education</li> <li>- Promotion of education, research and innovation</li> <li>- Foster internationalisation of universities</li> <li>- Increase mobility</li> <li>- New and diversified funding sources</li> </ul>		In the process of designing and debating the <b>new LUC</b> .  Introduction of a new objective based funding arrangement.

Source: elaborated from the policies listed above and Barlete (2008:95)

As indicated in table 4.1. it can be withdrawn that in recent years, especially after the year 2000, there has been an increased activity in the design of higher education policies, documents and other initiatives and in all three dimensions considered. This goes for Europe, Spain and Catalonia. As such this coincides with the Lisbon Strategy and the first phase of implementation of the Bologna Process. At national level, the major activities can be found in the new version of the University Act and its later modification. At regional level the Catalan government and the ACUP have been particularly active. Not long after the Spanish

regulatory framework gave the regions the competence to manage higher education, the Catalan government passed the LUC, the Catalan University Act (2003) by which the Catalan higher education system was defined. However, the majority of the activities are concentrated after the year 2006. The EC's Modernisation Agenda is used, together with the EHEA and the need to increase excellence and competitiveness, as a justification for the initiatives both at national and regional level.

All the policies and documents mentioned include specific ideas, policies, recommendations and strategies that contain as priority issues the thematic interests of this study: autonomy, funding and quality. In the next sections we will go deeper into each of the assumptions and discuss the European, Spanish and Catalan position with respect to each of them.

## 4.3 Analysis of assumptions

### 4.3.1 University autonomy

The starting point of this section's discussion is the assumption higher education policies in Spain (Catalonia) have progressively increased university autonomy. The approach to this discussion is to firstly revise how the notion of university autonomy is perceived in the European, Spanish and Catalan policies. Secondly, a table with a set of indicators will be presented to demonstrate the changes regarding university autonomy in recent years. Finally, some additional information gathered from the interviews will be contrasted to the results of the table and previous discussions.

#### *Europe and the notion of university autonomy*

In 1988 the Magna Charta proclaimed the crucial role that universities had to play in the cultural, scientific and technical development of societies. In addition, it provided a set of four fundamental principles of which the first one is:

*'The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.'*

The Magna Charta arose as an initiative of European Rectors which was later endorsed by Rectors from all over the world.

Later on, and parallel to the first steps of the Bologna Process, the European Commission in the Lisbon summit in 2000 set the now famous goal of creating ‘*the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010*’. This goal came hand in hand with the idea that education and training were at the base of any change required to accomplish the overall objective.

After 2000, the EC has published three important documents on the contribution of universities to the Lisbon Strategy’s aims: *The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge* (2003), *Mobilising the Brainpower of Europe* (2005) and the *Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation* (2006). These EC policy documents made recommendations to the national higher education systems and touched upon the three areas of interest of this study.

In terms of institutional autonomy, this policy suggests to the national higher education systems that they open up to governance reforms that will allow an increase of university autonomy and to foster professional management to augment institutional innovation and flexibility (i.e. faster decision making processes).

In 2007 the EUA positioned itself on the Lisbon Declaration in the paper *The Lisbon Declaration. Europe’s Universities beyond 2010: Diversity with a Common Purpose*. Regarding university autonomy, the notion is depicted in the paper’s first and sixth section. At the first instance the document makes a call for more university autonomy (and adequate funding) as it is considered a requirement for institutions to be able to answer to the challenges and needs of their societies. Autonomy is understood as the ‘control of major assets and of staff’, as well as a ‘readiness to be accountable to both the internal university community and to society as a whole’. In the sixth section the paper calls upon the governments to endorse the principle of institutional autonomy. On the one hand, so as to allow space for differentiated missions and to include academic, financial, organisation and staffing autonomy. On the other hand, the European universities declare their commitment to reinforce leadership and strengthen professional management (as a clear reference to the EC’s ‘Modernisation Agenda’). In another paper published in 2008, *Financially Sustainable Universities: Towards Full Costing in European Universities*, the EUA clearly positions itself by stating that,



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*'Only strong universities with a greater autonomy and accountability rather than universities over-regulated by national and European governmental agencies will be able to play their full part in responding to a changing society and its demands and in contributing to the revised Lisbon Agenda on Growth and Jobs.'* (EUA 2008:14)

This section has taken into account the position of the universities and that of the European Council and Commission. These agents agree on the need to increase institutional autonomy as a way to foster institutional differentiation which, in turn, should respond better to the current and future challenges of Europe's society. Accountability is strongly linked to the increase of university autonomy.

### *Spain and the notion of university autonomy*

In Spain, the notion of university autonomy appeared as a fundamental right in the (post-Franco) Constitution of 1978 (article 27.10). Some years later, when the University Reform Act (LRU) was passed, universities were granted autonomous status and the major system level responsibilities were transferred from the central to the regional government. Nevertheless, the strong central regulatory frameworks (on study programmes, staff requirements, number of students, etc) left little 'space' for universities to execute their autonomy.

The *Bricall University Report* (2000) defined autonomy as a characteristic of the institution, not of its members, outlining a different dimension to that of the Magna Charta and the notion of academic freedom stemming from the Humboldtian ideals. It includes a three dimensional conception of autonomy by understanding it as: financial autonomy, management and administration autonomy and academic autonomy. According to this report, the level of autonomy of a specific university is independent to the organisational model in which the university is immersed. The report called for universities to be able to define their own missions and objectives so that it could be accountable for its work and demand sufficient resources for the set objectives. This call was answered and included in the LOU (2001) and the LOMLOU (2007).

In 2001 the second University Act was passed (LOU). This Act mentions university autonomy in its preamble numerous times but usually linked to the notions of efficiency,

effectiveness and accountability. Section 2 in Article 2 of the Act presents a concrete definition of what is considered university autonomy<sup>43</sup>:

- a) *The elaboration of the Statutes, and, in the case of private universities, of their own organisation and Management rules, as well as all the other internal regulations. The election, designation and re-motion of the corresponding governmental and representative organs.*
- b) *The creation of specific structures that act as a support to research and teaching.*
- c) *The elaboration and approval of study and research plans, and lifelong learning study programmes.*
- d) *The selection, training and promotion of academic and administration staff, as well as the determination of the conditions under which they are to develop their activities.*
- e) *The admission, permanence regime and verification of knowledge by students.*
- f) *The expedition of official degrees and the validity of the institutions own diplomas and degrees in all Spanish territory.*
- g) *The elaboration, approval and management of the institution's budgets and the administration of its assets.*
- h) *The establishment and modification of the relation of its working positions*
- i) *The establishment of relations with other entities to promote and develop its institutional goals.*
- j) *Any other competence necessary for the adequate compliance of the functions outlined in article 1 section 2.*

Nevertheless, the Spanish Rectors' Conference (CRUE) did not agree with the law as they considered that it had been written from a position of mistrust and included too many regulations and specifications on the organisms that would 'govern' universities at a national and regional level, as well as the internal organisation of universities.

In the posterior modification of this law in 2007 (LOMLOU), the preamble reiterated the respect to university autonomy, a requirement for universities to be able to adequately respond to the changing society in the context of European integration (with a specific reference to the EC's Modernisation Agenda). Once more, the law linked university autonomy to accountability, putting high expectations on universities to account for their functioning. In addition, the law introduced a new measure meant to increase university autonomy by which higher education institutions are now allowed to choose the way in which the rector is elected (either through the Senate or through universal suffrage) and to create their own study plans and degrees. However, as demonstrated by the interviews, university leaders consider that this autonomy is not translated into practice adequately as the bureaucratic burden of evaluation mechanisms and the one-for-all guidelines designed by the ANECA do not facilitate the creation of new degrees and curricula.

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<sup>43</sup> Translation by the author.

The latest major higher education development in the Spanish sphere is the policy document *Estrategia Universidad 2015* elaborated by the Ministry of Science and Innovation<sup>44</sup>. In this document, autonomy is seen as a fundamental right to be respected, and is consistently related to the differentiation of the higher education system by allowing each university to define its own mission and objectives, to specialise in what it considers best. Again, autonomy is closely linked to quality, evaluation and accreditation schemes (accountability). The strategy intends to provide best practices to simplify the bureaucratic measures that are standing in the way of some of the new measures introduced by the new regulations (LOU and LOMLOU).

Summing up, university autonomy is a constitutional fundamental right that universities acquired in the post-Franco Constitution of 1978. However, autonomy had a very narrow meaning and national regulations have been the rule. Recently, with the LOU and the LOMLOU the notion of university autonomy has been broadened. The recent *Estrategia Universidad 2015* uses the notion to introduce differentiation in the Spanish higher education system. Nevertheless, academic leaders do not perceive the new notion as sufficient for the adequate development of their institutions (CRUE:2000).

### *Catalonia and the notion of university autonomy*<sup>45</sup>

In the Catalan university system the notion of autonomy can be retrieved from the Catalan University Act (LUC) passed in 2003 and by what the public universities maintain regarding university autonomy in their institutional leadership. Nonetheless as a background to understand the notion of institutional autonomy in this region, it is important to recall the report *For a New University Model* published in 2001. This report reflected upon the current situation of the Catalan university system and detected three major areas for reform (governance, staff and student policies and funding) and set a series of recommendations. The notion of university autonomy appears in this document as a fundamental right and is closely linked to social responsibility, accountability and the freedom of universities to define their missions and objectives.

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<sup>44</sup> Until recently this Ministry was in charge of the higher education sector, however, at present universities are under the Ministry of Education. Consequently it is unknown how much this policy document will be adopted by the new Ministry.

<sup>45</sup> At present, the Catalan government has just drafted a first version of a second University Act, necessary after the modification of the national LOU by the LOMLOU in 2007. This draft is encountering strong opposition from the rectors particularly on the issue of university autonomy.

The first principle which the LUC lies upon is that of university autonomy which implies that,

*(...) each university is entrusted with the task of safeguarding the general interest in higher education, has full organisational and operational freedom, is self-regulating, and is accountable to society under the terms established by law.*

The Act also includes the notion of financial autonomy. Nevertheless, the Act depicts two organisms, the Catalan Inter-university Council (CIC) and the corresponding department in the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, as having power to organise and regulate certain aspects of universities, although always respecting university autonomy.

On the other hand, the *White Paper of the University of Catalonia* (2008) which expresses the position of the Rectors of the Catalan public universities, states that the administrative authorities regulate the access of students, the syllabi, qualification and assessment requirements, and access to the academic career, whereas the university community only exerts control over the few other elements of the system. It adds that universities should have university autonomy to allow them to design their own objectives and be responsible for their decisions as a way to better respond to current times and challenges. In order to reach this goal, it is required light regulatory frameworks, sufficient funding and an adequate accountability process. The *White Paper* relates university autonomy to accountability, social responsibility and quality, and considers adequate funding a necessity for appropriate university autonomy.

In conclusion, once again we find that autonomy is considered as a crucial element for the development of universities at both governmental and institutional levels. There is a general agreement that university autonomy requires adequate funding and means the acceptance to be accountable to society at large.

### *Have Catalan public universities increased their autonomy?*

University autonomy in Spain is mainly determined by the national regulatory framework leaving little space for regional differentiation.

According to the *Bricall University Report* Spain is one of the European countries, together with the United Kingdom (UK), Sweden and The Netherlands with most university autonomy. Nevertheless there exists a paradox in the Spanish higher education system regarding autonomy. The system has a high level of academic freedom and job protection,

but on the other hand, there is a weak institutional autonomy, due mainly to excessive government regulation and control of the system (Karran 2007).

Retrieving the assumption that Catalan universities have progressively increased their institutional autonomy and using the indicators developed by De Boer and File (CHEPS 2009) we present a table (4.2) that shows in which aspects institutional autonomy has improved in the past years in Spain and in Catalonia.

*Table 4.2 Institutional autonomy changes in Spain (1995-2008)*

Indicators	Past	2008	Major change
Legal obligation to produce a strategic plan for the university which outlines main strategic objectives;	No, up to the university.	No, up to the university.	
Ability to determine their own internal governance structures;	No, the university's internal governance structure is prescribed by detailed regulations.	No, the university has only restricted leeway to determine its own governance structure within ministry regulations.	
Ability to determine research programmes and major research themes within the university;	Yes, but national research priorities have a major impact.	Yes, but national research priorities have a major impact.	
The requirement to have internal quality evaluation systems for research and teaching;	<u>Teaching</u> : No, this is completely up to the university.  <u>Research</u> : No, this is completely up to the university.	<u>Teaching</u> : Yes, this is required, but the university can decide on the methods to use, although these methods will be evaluated by the ministry.  <u>Research</u> : No, this is completely up to the university.	X
The requirement to take part in external quality evaluation systems for research and teaching;	<u>Teaching</u> : No, this is completely up to the university.  <u>Research</u> : Yes, but they apply only to a small part of the basic research taking place at the university.	<u>Teaching</u> : Yes, this is required for all universities and the process is prescribed by the ministry.  <u>Research</u> : Yes, but they apply only to a small part of the basic research taking place at the university.	X
The freedom to enter partnerships with other organisations and higher education institutions;	Yes, universities are allowed to start up such partnerships but specific regulations for such university partnerships must be taken into account.	Yes, this is completely up to the university (within the legal framework).  For university – university/higher education institution partnerships ministry	

Indicators	Past	2008	Major change
	For university – university/higher education institution partnerships ministry approval is required.	approval is required.	
The requirement to report upon their activities and/or performance;	Yes, universities are obliged to provide data and information to update national databases.	Yes, universities are obliged to provide data and information to update national databases.	
The freedom to select students;	No, universities have to accept all qualified students up to the number of study places available.	No, universities have to accept all qualified students up to the number of study places available.	
Freedom to decide on the internal allocation of public and private funds.	Since the 1983 LRU Act universities have freedom to allocate funds internally.	Since the 1983 LRU Act universities have freedom to allocate funds internally.  However universities are now allowed to generate more categories of private funding such as: income from sales of assets, income from holding and/or selling shares in spin-offs or other companies, income from the university establishing its own private companies.	X
Own their buildings and equipment	Yes.	Yes.	
Borrow funds	Yes, but subject to government regulations.	Yes, but subject to government regulations.	
Set academic structure/course content	Yes, but subject to approval of the ministry in terms of system capacity planning; programmes were regulated at national level.	Yes, but subject to approval of the ministry in terms of system capacity planning, subject to accreditation by relevant agency and provided the requirements of business and industry or professional organisations have been taken into account.	X
Employ and dismiss academic staff	Type of positions is regulated at national level. Number of positions in each university by type is decided by the university (budget restriction is key factor). Selection is made among candidates in a public competition.	Type of positions is regulated at national level. Number of positions in each university by type is decided by the university (budget restriction is key factor). Selection is made among candidates in a public competition. Candidates must be accredited by national	

Indicators	Past	2008	Major change
		agency.	
Set salaries	No, salary levels are set by national authorities.	No, salary levels are set by national authorities. There are, nevertheless, incentives based on performance and the possibility to participate in other remunerated activities.	
Decide size of student enrolment	No, the number of study places is fixed after negotiations between the ministry and individual universities.	No, the number of study places is fixed after negotiations between the ministry and individual universities.	
Decide level of tuition fees	No, tuition fees were set at national level.	No, tuition fees are set at regional level, however for the official master programmes and doctoral studies the regional governments fix a range and the institutions decide the exact fee per programme.	

Source: adapted from CHEPS 2009, OECD (2003), Mora (upcoming)

Although this table does not refer specifically to the way in which the (changes in the) framework have affected institutional autonomy in practice it provides an important understanding of the regulatory framework with regards to university autonomy in Spain. All in all we can see that some major changes have happened in the past years and that university autonomy has, in general, increased. Nonetheless, considering the academic leadership position, there is a general agreement that while autonomy has indeed increased, so has the bureaucracy related to evaluation, accountability and the like impeding universities to truly experience the autonomy often mentioned in the policy documents. The *White Paper of the University of Catalonia* (2008) asserts that institutional autonomy, though strengthened at a regulatory level, is tempered by an external system of accountability. It also stresses the need to have mid and long term financial plans that allow institutions to plan their mid and long term objectives. The *White Paper* includes a specific project (Project 56<sup>46</sup>) calling for a legislative reform to remove the excessive regulations that

<sup>46</sup> Project 56: Legislative reform Request that the Catalan and Central governments should reform the respective university laws to remove the excessive regulations that interfere with university autonomy from them. Take advantage of the reform of the LUC in this sense (ACUP 2008:144).

interfere with university autonomy (it is envisaged in the reform of the LUC in process at present). Other measures proposed by the Rectors of the Catalan public universities include decentralisation of operative functions, the promotion of *ex post* assessment and the introduction of new methods of accountability to society.

### *Conclusion*

There is an overall ‘match’ at the three levels considered, European, Spanish and Catalan, on the notion of university autonomy which represents a shift in responsibility from the state to the institutions. In addition, the conception that university autonomy is crucial for the adequate performance of higher education institutions and its functions is also widespread. Yet, there seems to be a contradiction between the intention (seen in the different university acts) of the national and regional authorities and the implementation of the regulations. Most of the ‘new freedoms’ come hand in hand with bureaucratic processes of accountability and other tiresome processes. Thus we could state that there is a normative agreement that is not translated into practice in its full potential.

Another issue to take into account is the general acceptance and promotion of the notion of university autonomy at all levels. In this sense, although reality is not as pictured in the policy documents, there is a match between European (EU and EUA), national (Spanish authorities and CRUE) and regional (*Generalitat de Catalunya* and ACUP) actors.

How much of this ‘match’ is directly related to European influence is difficult to pin down, but the fact that increasing university autonomy is basic for the core academic values for sure has an important role. For the EC and its objectives to increase university autonomy the acceptance or match with the Catalan and Spanish policies is surely positive.

### **4.3.2 Higher education funding**

The starting point of this section is to examine the assumption that universities in Spain, and specifically in Catalonia, have increased and diversified their funding resources.

Like in the previous section, firstly we will go through the European, Spanish and Catalan policy arenas analysing their position on the notion of increasing and diversifying higher education funding sources. Then, data from the policy documents, studies and the interviews will be brought forth in order to measure the changes in this respect in recent years. This section ends with a brief conclusion on the major findings.



### *Europe and the notion of increased and diversified higher education funding resources*

Revising the events in recent years and the policy documents of table 4.1., one can see that the Bologna Process does not include any position on higher education funding. The first document that approaches higher education funding is the Lisbon Strategy, basically asserting that for Europe to become a competitive knowledge society and economy it is necessary to increase the overall expenditure in higher education (2% of GDP) and research (3% of GDP).

Three important documents published by the Commission in recent years examine the contribution of universities to the Lisbon Strategy's objectives: *The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge* (2003), *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe* (2005) and *The Modernisation Agenda* (2006). These papers include recommendations made to national higher education systems of member states which touch upon the three areas of interest of this study. Regarding university funding the Commission's position is that more and more efficient funding is necessary, it encourages national governments and higher education institutions to increase investments in higher education through private funding resources such as: student tuition fees, university-industry cooperation activities and an increase in investment in research initiatives. The models suggested are either output-based or market oriented university funding schemes. The rationale behind this 'encouragement' to increase funding and diversify the resources lies in the notion that States cannot absorb the increasing financial demand of public higher education systems as they could in the past. Additionally, the aim is twofold. Firstly the objective of this measure is to increase competitiveness of the EHEA. Secondly the aim is to augment differentiation so as to better respond to the social needs of Europe while at the same time being able to compete with the first class world universities.

The paper titled *The Lisbon Declaration. Europe's Universities beyond 2010: Diversity with a Common Purpose* (EUA, 2007) sets the European universities' common position regarding the Lisbon goals and presents some specific demands on the national governments. Regarding the issue at hand, first of all it links adequate and sufficient funding to university autonomy, understanding funding as a tool that capacitates universities to adequately execute their autonomy. Secondly, it calls governments to reach the 2% of GDP investment and to allow and facilitate private income streams. Higher education is considered as a public good but universities understand that with the massification of universities and the high cost of

maintaining excellence in the global arena the cost of higher education cannot be burdened solely on public resources. In this sense it calls upon an increased participation of students by means of higher tuition fees as a private stream of income, together with industry partnerships (but at a lower degree).

To conclude, there is a general agreement between the Commission and the EUA on the need to, first of all, increase, and secondly, diversify higher education funding resources. Tuition fees and, to a lesser extent, university-industry cooperation seem to be the identified 'solutions'.

### *Spain and the notion of diversified higher education funding resources*

Education and especially higher education is considered as an economic benefit for the country and as such the state (from its national budget and the autonomous communities' annual budgets) provides public education for all students who meet the requirements. Students are required, nevertheless, to pay tuition fees for every year they are enrolled in a study program. So, all in all, the state provides for up to 75% (approximately) of the expenses and students contribute the remaining 25% of what would be the real cost of their studies. Students coming from low-income families can apply for grants that cover tuition fees, mobility and studying material. The number of students receiving scholarships is decreasing, from 30% of the total students in 1990 to only 15% in 2004 due to lack of funds<sup>47</sup>.

Since the LRU Act in 1983, the autonomous communities are responsible for higher education funding leaving the central government with a minor role in this aspect. This decentralised agreement has led to 17 funding systems with major differences between them (Amoros et al., 2001). Some regions, specially the larger ones, have introduced contract and formulae funding mechanisms while others have remained with lump-sum allocations based in the historical incremental model.

The *Bricall University Report* (2000) dedicates a chapter to university funding in which it makes direct reference to the need to, first, increment public investment in higher education, and secondly, to promote diversification of funding sources. Accountability and transparency together with sufficiency and university autonomy are the fundamental principles behind

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<sup>47</sup> Comisión de Financiación del Consejo de Coordinación Universitaria 2007.

these recommendations. The academic leadership specifically mentions sufficiency and university autonomy as fundamental for higher education university performance<sup>48</sup>. Private contributions to higher education are, however, mostly understood as tuition fees to be paid by students.

Both the LOU and the posterior LOMLOU make no reference to funding resources, they merely justify accountability measures (necessary because of the autonomy awarded to the institutions) on the fact that public funds provide for the universities and their activities.

The policy document *Estrategia Universidad 2015* (2008) developed by the Ministry of Science and Innovation<sup>49</sup> uses the Lisbon Strategy goals as a justification for some of the reforms and demands it contains, specifically the aim to increase funding for higher education and research. Nonetheless, the diversification of higher education funding resources is not mentioned at all. The focus is mainly on presenting the detected need to find better funding arrangements for universities to be truly autonomous and to increase differentiation among the system so as to allow both excellence and equity issues to be both approached.

Recently (2007) the Funding Commission of the University Coordination Council elaborated a report on Spanish university funding. This report went through the current situation, used benchmarks from countries that excelled in higher education activities and opened the discussion on what changes are necessary for Spain to become fully integrated in the EHEA and internationally competitive. The increase of funding, once more, appears as an unquestionable goal, while the need to promote private investment in higher education is mentioned nearly on the side. The comparison made with countries considered excellent in higher education concludes that these countries dedicate a higher percentage of GDP for higher education and research than Spain while the sources range around 80% from public origin and 20% from private sources. Spain, as we have seen above, is very close to this distribution.

Summing up, there is a general agreement in the need to increase funding for higher education, although there seems to be no reference in the policies as to the need to diversify

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<sup>48</sup> Information from interviews.

<sup>49</sup> Bear in mind that the higher education sector has been under three different ministries in recent years, hence the different names.

funding sources. The focus is set on increasing the amount of funding for higher education and research, as well as a concern on respecting equity, efficiency and effectiveness and to accept the social responsibility for accountability processes. The overall aim is to increase competitiveness and quality of the sector for full integration into the EHEA and to be present internationally.

### *Catalonia and the notion of increased and diversified higher education funding resources*

In the 2001 report *For a New University Model* funding is discussed as one of the main issues to be approached. The report alleges that higher education funding must serve as an incentive to universities to improve performance. Funding should be based on sufficiency, autonomy and a correlation between resources and results. The last paragraph of this document raises the idea that public funding is not incompatible with the need that public universities broaden their funding sources, as long as it is transparent funding. This idea is shared by some interviewees despite the controversy that funding from private sector sources arises among the university members, especially students.

Since the Catalan government was delegated, among other competences, the control of allocating funding to the universities in the autonomous community of Catalonia, there has only been one University Act passed (2003). Title V of this Act describes the basic instruments for organising the Catalan university system, namely, the Catalan University Plan and the University Funding Programme. Three kinds of funding mechanisms are envisaged: general, complementary (by means of contract programmes<sup>50</sup>) and open competition (as explained in chapter 2). The basic principles behind higher education funding are those of equity, sufficiency, efficiency and effectiveness. Accountability seems to come hand in hand with the social responsibility of universities to society. The Act came with a commitment to significantly increase public funds for the higher education system. This Act does not mention private funding sources or the need to diversify them.

The *White Paper of the University of Catalonia* (2008) dedicates a whole chapter to discuss the present funding mechanisms. The focus lies, once more, on the need to increase overall university funding (justified by the Lisbon goals) and the principles of sufficiency for

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<sup>50</sup> Introduced in 1997. Later improvements or changes have been made but the basic idea of output-based and objective-based funding remains.

adequate execution of university autonomy, equity and accountability. Among other strategies and projects, the paper proposes a specific strategy, (*Strategy 63*<sup>51</sup>) to diversify the sources of funding, and a specific project (*Project 71*<sup>52</sup>) to this effect. By ‘diversify the sources of funding’ the *White Paper* (2008: 166) means to increase contribution from alumni, industry-university cooperation and private companies. It does not refer to, as seems the norm at the European level, an increase of student contribution.

In conclusion, like in the Spanish arena, the main concern lies on the necessity to raise the overall amount of funding for higher education and research. The sources seem to be, consistently and by defect, considered as coming from public funds although they are perceived as necessary, positive, but not the sole solution. The *Generalitat de Catalunya* the universities share a common position in this respect.

### *Have universities increased and diversified their funding sources?*

Recovering the assumption that universities in Spain, and specifically in Catalonia, have increased and diversified their funding resources we now set about providing data to enlighten what has happened and the changes (if any) in this sense.

The *Generalitat de Catalunya*, in the 2003 Act committed to increase progressively from 2003 to 2010 the amount of funding for higher education and research destined to universities up to 30%. The prevision of the gradual increase was as table 4.3. depicts:

*Table 4.3 Prevision of expenditure on higher education and research*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Prevision LUC (millions €)</b>	522,9	559,5	604,3	652,6	698,3	747,1	799,4	855,4

Source: Department of Innovation, Universities and Enterprises

<sup>51</sup> *Strategy 63: Joint, efficient Management. Develop specific tools and instruments to facilitate coordination, coherence, economies of scale and synergies of the public universities in the framework of the University of Catalonia* (ACUP 2008:155)

<sup>52</sup> *Project 71: Patronage and fiscal benefits. Promote legislative measures to promote patronage and tax benefits derived from investing in higher education and in research and innovation* (ACUP 2008:168).

Nevertheless, during the period of 2003-2006 the Catalan government improved this prevision to stimulate university research and created a specific programme to this effect, Programme to Foster Research (PROFOR). Hence, the real funding increase was:

*Table 4.4 Final expenditure on higher education and research*

(millions €)	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Prevision LUC</b>	522,9	559,5	604,3	652,6
<b>Special research agreements</b>	7,3	7,7	8,3	8,7
<b>Ordinary improvements</b>		19,2	2,4	21,0
	<b>530,2</b>	<b>586,4</b>	<b>615,0</b>	<b>682,3</b>

Source: Department of Innovation, Universities and Enterprises

Additionally the Generalitat, as a response to the EU objective to dedicate 3% of GDP to R&D activities and to impulse the implementation of the EHEA in Catalan universities approved an additional allocation for the period 2007-2010 conditioned to the accomplishment of strategic objectives. However, a major part of this additional funding has as of yet not been transferred to the universities creating uneasiness among the public universities and financial problems.

Consequently, the prevision of a 7% increment of the annual budget approved in the LUC has become an increment of 12.13% annually. Thus, public Catalan universities have nearly doubled their funding resources<sup>53</sup> in less than a decade.

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<sup>53</sup> At current prices but not a constant priced (discounting inflation).

Table 4.5 Funding resources for Catalan public universities

(millions €)	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Prevision LUC</b>	522,9	559,5	604,3	652,6	698,3	747,1	799,4	855,4
<b>Special research agreements</b>	7,3	7,7	8,3	8,7	9,1	9,3	9,8	10,3
<b>Ordinary improvements (2004-2006)</b>		19,2	2,4	21,0				
<b>Additional improvement (2007-2010)</b>					57,0	90,9	130,4	176,2
Not conditioned					40,0	40,0	40,0	40,0
Conditioned to objectives					17,0	50,9	90,4	136,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>530,2</b>	<b>586,4</b>	<b>615,0</b>	<b>682,3</b>	<b>764,4</b>	<b>847,3</b>	<b>939,6</b>	<b>1041,9</b>

Source: Department of Innovation, Universities and Enterprises

Regarding the sources of funding, the table 4.6 below indicates the origin of funding of the different funding allocations available for higher education institutions.

Table 4.6 University funding investment sources: private- public contributions

Funding Source	Contribution		
	State	Autonomous Community	Students
<b>Ordinary subsidies</b>		X	
<b>Grants and student aid</b>	X		
<b>Investment plans</b>		X	
<b>Public prices, tuition fees, etc.</b>			X
<b>R&amp;D funds</b>	X	X	
<b>Scholarships and other grants</b>		X	

Source: Informe CyD 2007:168

According to OECD data the estimated average proportion of the revenue that public Spanish universities derive from different sources is as follows:

*Table 4.7 Estimated average proportion of Spanish university revenue by sources*

Sources	Past (ca.1995)	Now
<b>Operational grant from public authorities (or core funding)</b>	74.4%	75.9%
<b>Tuition fees</b>	24%	20.8%
<b>Third party funding<sup>54</sup></b>	1.6%	3.3.%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be observed in the table 4.7 little has changed in the past years in the distribution of funding according to the different possible sources. Although this table is an estimation for all Spanish universities the numbers should not vary much in the case of the Catalan public universities. They would most likely be situated in the high level of third party funding as Catalan public universities are amongst the top Spanish universities in receiving EU funds.

Since private funding is mainly considered as student contribution and industry-university cooperation and other possible sources of funding seem to be minimal, the discussion brings us back to the EUA paper encouraging governments to increase student expenditure. In the Spanish, and therefore Catalan, contexts, (and probably in many other European countries) higher education is understood as a public good. It is widely accepted that students must contribute to some extent as they will benefit from the participation in higher education. Nevertheless, a significant increase of tuition fees seems unlikely at the moment. Mora (2003) alleges that higher education provides societies and economies with important collective benefits but the private benefits (for enterprises and the individuals) are very high, meanwhile these individuals hardly participate in funding higher education. The main consequence of this situation is that universities are poorly funded and users are not

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<sup>54</sup> Third party funding: all project and contract funding received from public, international and private sources, such as research council funding, ministry programmes, EU funds, contract research and contract teaching (De Boer and File 2009). It can vary considerably between institutions depending on how strong they are on technological transfer. Technical universities usually have higher percentages.



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committed to the teaching/learning process which in turn leads to low efficiency of the system.

However, any change in this respect would inevitably collide with the current public opinion defending higher education as a public good and nearly free to all those who meet the academic requirements. Although in a different context, as Gornitzka (1999) states changes are best integrated and accepted when they do not contradict identities and culture.

Similarly there is an ongoing ‘public’<sup>55</sup> discourse in Spain and Catalonia in which any contribution to universities by private sources, especially from industry and private companies, is considered as ‘marketisation’ and ‘privatisation’ of higher education and very negative for academic freedom<sup>56</sup>.

To sum up, there has been a significant increase in public funding expenditure on higher education and research as a response to the Lisbon Strategy, but hardly any changes can be observed in the funding sources of universities and any change in this direction seems, at the moment, unlikely, despite the few initiatives.

## *Conclusion*

In this section we have at looked on how Europe, Spain and Catalonia approach the notion of increase and diversification of funding resources in higher education. The main focus lies on the necessity to reach the goals set by the Lisbon Strategy: to increase investment in higher education. The diversification of funding sources appears as a secondary objective and one which will enable universities to generate revenues on their own, whether by increased tuition fees or by engaging in university-industry activities.

The data evidences that Catalan universities have increased the amount of funding resources but that there has been little change in the past years regarding the sources of funding which seems to be in line with the major EU trends expressed in the *The Financing of Higher Education in Europe* (2004:7) report. The study concludes that less than 15% of innovative mechanisms introduced by the EU Member States are aimed at diversification of funding sources. In addition, the report indicates that there are hardly any innovative mechanisms,

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<sup>55</sup> The ideas are promoted by students, some professors and university staff which have arisen as an opposition to the implementation of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is used to complain on the current university situation and the rise of tuition fees in certain programmes (official master credits are slightly more costly than bachelor credits).

<sup>56</sup> These ideas have been present in the recent anti-Bologna demonstrations lived in Spain.

which do not exist already in another country. This seems to indicate that there is a tendency to be cautious in introducing new mechanisms and a preference to opt for those ones which have been tried and tested elsewhere. It should also be noted that public authorities can create policies to stimulate private investment in higher education, but only to a certain extent.

### **4.3.3 Quality assurance and accreditation**

The starting point of this section is to examine the assumption that higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have been increasingly stimulated by the national and regional authorities to accept the use of external quality assessment and accreditation mechanisms. To this effect we will go through the policy documents outlined in table (4.2) and examine what are the priorities expressed in them. The exercise will be done for the European, Spanish and Catalan arenas. Data from the interviews will be used where relevant. This section ends with a brief conclusion on the major findings.

#### *Quality assurance and accreditation in Europe*

Firstly, it is important to understand how quality became an issue in higher education in Europe. Westerheijden (2004) declares that when the traditional trust pact broke between politics (society) and higher education, higher education became a political affair. From that moment onwards an increased focus on quality and accountability became the new way of controlling higher education institutions and their work. The rise of the ‘evaluative state’ (Neave 1988) with an increased focus on managerialism and the lack of trust between the work and function of higher education have also been mentioned as reasons behind the emphasis on quality assessment and accountability (Gornitzka, et al. 2004). Today it is in the context of the Bologna Process that quality is at the centre of the higher education debate and reform in Europe.

While with university autonomy and funding the Bologna Process did not have a prominent part to play, in the case of quality assurance and accreditation, as mentioned above, it has had a major role. The Bologna Declaration sets out as one of its objectives the ‘promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies’ (Bologna Declaration, 1999). In addition, and related to the notion of quality it stressed, that ‘we [European Ministers of Education] must in particular look at the

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objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education' (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

Quality, competitiveness, attractiveness and excellence have become buzzwords in the policy documents at the European level. The biannual Communiqués from the ministerial meetings of the Bologna Process always mention, with emphasis in slightly different aspects, the importance of quality assurance for the EHEA. Summing up the ideas expressed in these documents the main points appear as:

- The need to increase attractiveness of the EHEA;
- The need to establish European standards and guidelines, and to consistently work towards them;
- The role quality and accreditation have in making the EHEA transparent and comparable (which in turn should stimulate mobility).

In the documents issued by the EC, quality assessment and accreditation mechanisms appear as tools with which to reach excellence (together with adequate and sufficient funding). High quality is presented as an objective which will permit the EHEA, and the EU, to be more internationally attractive and competitive. These understandings include the idea of higher education institutions meeting specific standards of quality and introducing excellence by means of elite programmes with a strong international dimension, demanding selection criteria and high tuition fees (ESIB 2005). The EC, to this effect, took the initiative to establish new structures such as the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (intending to compete with the worldwide recognised Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and the European Research Council.

The EUA works on three different levels regarding quality assurance, institutional, national and European, and links them all to the notion of accountability. At the institutional level the focus is on aiding universities to introduce and establish internal quality assurance mechanisms. At the national level the EUA focuses on supporting the external quality assurance procedures through the national and regional quality agencies. Finally, at a European level, the EUA works to foster a European dimension of quality assurance and accountability and has participated with ESIB, ENQA and EURASHE (E4 Group) in various projects in this direction.

In the paper '*The Lisbon Declaration. Europe's Universities beyond 2010: Diversity with a Common Purpose*' (EUA 2007) the European universities' position is expressed in section V. The document reflects their agreement to internal and external (quality (and accountability) procedures and to creating a European dimension to increase the overall attractiveness of the EHEA. The text also includes demands of trust and respect to institutional initiatives and especially on the work elaborated by the E4 Group. The paper also underlines the European universities' recognition of the importance external mechanisms of quality accountability but add that these schemes should not duplicate the internal ones and that academics should be allowed an active role in designing the external accountability systems. In addition, the EUA in one of its studies<sup>57</sup> outlined the high risk of over-bureaucratisation as one of the main challenges that external quality evaluation and accreditation processes have to deal with (EUA 2006:16).

In 2003 the Ministers of Education, in their biannual meeting for the Bologna Process in Berlin, asked ENQA to elaborate an 'agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance' and 'to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies' with the aim to improve the overall quality across the EHEA with consistent standards. In 2005 the document *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* was published by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, ESIB and EURASHE.

To sum up, different comprehensions of the terms quality assurance according to the different actors can be appreciated together with a stress on the role of external quality (and accountability) mechanisms. Regarding the different notions of quality assurance, on the one hand, we find the EC's use of the term, linked to competitiveness and excellence, and with a strong international dimension (the objective to become a worldwide competitive actor in higher education). On the other hand, we find the European universities which focus on introducing and consolidating internal and external quality culture with the aim to be accountable to society and improve their performance. The Ministers of Education are in the middle position, seeking to increase attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA but also seeking institutional support and European standards.

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<sup>57</sup> EUA (2006) *Quality Culture in European Universities: A Bottom-Up Approach*.

### *Quality assurance and accreditation in Spain*

In Spain, the first evaluation programmes were initiated, like in many other countries, in the early 1990s by initiative of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) but with the participation of only a few universities in the first programme. It was based on self-evaluation and peer visits who wrote final reports. The areas evaluated were: teaching, research and management in the different administration units (Mora 2000, Mora 2007). In 1995 an official and nation wide programme was established: the National Plan for Quality Evaluation (PNECU). The PNECU lasted until 2001 and is considered as fairly successful as it helped to extend quality culture in Spanish universities.

In 2001 a new plan was established, II Quality Plan for Universities. This was a 6 year programme that introduced new elements, such as public information of the university programmes, a quality certification system and an accreditation system (Mora 2007:148).

The Spanish national quality and accreditation agency (ANECA) was not founded till after the LOU was passed in 2001. The LOU, for the first time, contained an article (No. 31) on university quality assurance with the objectives to<sup>58</sup>:

- a) *Measure the performance of higher education public service and accountability towards society.*
- b) *Provide transparency, comparison, cooperation and competitiveness of universities at a national and International level.*
- c) *Improve teaching and research activities as well as overall Management of universities.*
- d) *Provide information for the Public Administration policy decision in the Framework of its competences.*
- e) *Provide information for society to stimulate excellence and student and teacher mobility.*

The notion of quality and accreditation appears firstly as an accountability procedure towards society, secondly as a mechanism to foster teaching and research performance improvement and finally as a way to promote excellence and student and staff mobility. The LOMLOU in its preamble links quality to the modernisation of universities and their autonomy.

Apart from the accreditation of the university degrees which can only be performed by ANECA and is done by an *ex-post* process (Vidal 2003), all other activities can be executed also by the regional agencies (Mora 2000)<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> The author's translation.

<sup>59</sup> Not all regions have quality agencies established.

ANECA's mission statement declares that,

*"the ultimate goal of the Trust is to contribute to the quality improvement of the higher education system through the assessment, certification and accreditation of university degrees, programmes, teaching staff and institutions" (ANECA 2001).*

The Agency also stresses the need for transparency of public administration; that institutions must be accountable for achieving their aims and must provide feedback to society by publishing reports with evaluation results. The ANECA considers international cooperation as fundamental for the improvement of higher education quality and has actively joined the ENQA<sup>60</sup> and participated in numerous European quality projects.

Nevertheless, and according to Mora (2007:149), there is a real danger that the external quality evaluation and accreditation process may become too bureaucratic. The first moves of the ANECA were not too optimistic in this sense. The first actions of this agency and the rush to implement new activities (including accreditation) provoked a negative reaction to the culture of quality. The capacity of the ANECA and other regional agencies to develop dynamic structures to overcome these problems is crucial to avoid this threat. Also implementation of recommendations and process follow-up are essential, it is necessary that the people involved in the assessment and the university community in general feel that quality evaluation and accreditation is a worthwhile activity, with substantial consequences and rewards (Mora 2007:149).

The Spanish government, through the document *Estrategia Universidad 2015* (2008) reiterates its support to increasing university quality (and external evaluation mechanisms) in Spain with the double objective of serving as an accountability procedure and to foster national and international competitiveness. The document relies heavily on the Lisbon Strategy goals and the 2006 Modernisation Agenda issued by the EC.

The CRUE has expressed in its communication a similar position to that of the EUA, in that it supports quality mechanisms (internal and external) for accountability to society and the overall improvement of higher education in Spain.

Concluding this section and to sum up the ideas presented, the national authorities in Spain and the institutions themselves through the CRUE conceive internal and external quality assurance and evaluation as a necessary requirement for the improvement of the individual

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<sup>60</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

universities, the system as a whole as well as to account for their activities to the society that funds them. Nonetheless, it has been detected that over bureaucratisation is a challenge to the Spanish national and regional quality agencies and that although there have been many improvements in the past decade there is still a lack of quality culture in higher education institutions (Mora 2007:149).

### *Quality assurance and accreditation in Catalonia*

Catalonia can boast to have outrun Spain in introducing quality culture in the Catalan higher education system. The Catalan Agency for Quality (AQU) was constituted in 1996, years before the national quality agency, with the aim of promoting the improvement of quality in the Catalan university system (File 2006). It was legally conformed as a consortium which included the Rectors and the Presidents of the Social Councils of the public universities and the *Generalitat de Catalunya*. Like ANECA, it is not an independent body. In the succeeding years AQU developed rapidly and has achieved European and international recognition (File 2006). It is also a founding member of the ENQA and REACU<sup>61</sup>. Under the Catalan University Law (LUC) of 2003 AQU is considered as the focal mechanism for the enhancement and evaluation of quality and was given a new legal status. The agency has a commission for quality evaluation, a commission for the evaluation of candidates for professorial posts and a commission for the evaluation of research.

The paper *For a New University Model* (2001) highlights quality as an intrinsic feature of higher education institutions and their activities in Catalonia. It is considered that society has to demand and expect high quality from universities and it is taken for granted that all the appropriate measures will be taken to guarantee a high quality teaching/learning environment as well as high quality research outcomes. In addition, it is expected that the training that students receive will be recognised and competitive in international spheres. Moreover the document stresses university accountability to society and envisions the process as *a posteriori* internal and external evaluations and assessments and carried out by the AQU.

The LUC (2003) begins by stressing that quality-oriented policies must lead to international competitiveness while guaranteeing excellent service to the Catalan society. There is a direct

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<sup>61</sup> The Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies the purpose of which is to promote inter-agency collaboration to contribute to establishing the conditions for the mutual recognition of their evaluation processes.

relation to the developments in the European and international contexts that justify this double objective. Excellence is expressed as an ‘indispensable prerequisite for progress in all areas of university life, particularly in teaching, research and technology and knowledge transfer’. And later it is added that:

*A university will be able to perform its social function effectively only if higher education institutions constantly set new objectives and strive to maintain their position at the cutting edge of knowledge and in other facets of university activity.*

Title VII of the LUC refers to guarantees of university quality, much like the LOU did two years earlier. In this case the AQU is the agency in charge of examining quality standards in the Catalan system, whenever the ANECA does not have the priority. In addition, quality evaluation of teaching, research and university management appears in the guiding principles for the Catalan higher education system. In this law quality assurance and evaluation is expressed from the same perspective as the *For a New University Model* (2001) document.

The ACUP, on its side, includes higher education quality nearly as a synonym to accountability and to the correspondence between (higher) education and the adequate preparation of the future workers. Once more quality evaluation appears as an intrinsic process of higher education and as an essential component for a modern higher education system. Quality evaluation, according to the ACUP’s model, should be done in a simplified way avoiding bureaucracy and duplicities and which takes advantage of the joint instruments for internal quality and assessment. This later statement is important to keep in mind since it contains the academics’ views.

Moreover, the interviews suggest that internal and external quality evaluation are considered as primordial for the wellbeing of the whole system, but the way in which they are run at present is strongly criticised alleging heavy bureaucracy, especially in the external process, and a uniform set of values that does not foster institutional differentiation. The criticisms expressed by the interviewees were directed at the procedures established by the ANECA for the recently awarded freedom for universities to create their own degrees and the lack of information on why certain procedures are necessary.

To conclude, the conception of quality evaluation in the Catalan context is slightly closer to the European notion which is a mixture between competitiveness, excellence, accountability and contribution to the development of society. These notions are brought into practice both through internal and external mechanisms. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the ACUP, as



representative of the view of the academics, makes a call for internal quality mechanisms that should ‘feed’ the external procedures in a simplified manner (trying to avoid over bureaucratisation) but also by having a stronger influence in the criteria established to measure quality in university activities.

### *Conclusions*

There is a general agreement on the importance of internal and external quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms for higher education in Europe. On the one hand, the Bologna Process has through in each ministerial meeting reiterated its significance and boosted the acceptance of the procedures (internal and external) at times focusing on the aim of overall higher education improvement and at other times on the objective to increase excellence and attractiveness of the EHEA (more in line with the Lisbon Strategy goals). On the other hand, European universities focus their view on general improvement and accountability processes more than on creating a world competitive higher education area. At a national level, Spain is still in the process of introducing an internal quality culture (Mora 2007:149) in institutions and among staff. Catalonia, however, had a head start on introducing external quality assurance processes as it began years before the national agency was established. Probably due to this the discussion seems to have moved on and centred on creating differentiated excellent institutional profiles to increase overall competitiveness of the Catalan higher education system as well as finding the balance to adequately combine excellent education with the social function of universities to train the future labour force.

At all levels, bureaucratisation of external quality evaluation schemes is perceived as an important challenge and risk for the acceptance, implementation and success of quality evaluation and accreditation mechanisms. In Catalonia academic leaders and universities in general complain on the amount of bureaucratic procedures that external quality evaluation procedures demand, and, as mentioned above, have made a call for a simplification of the procedures and more trust on universities’ internal quality assessment mechanisms.

## **4.4 Final comments**

This chapter has overviewed the three areas of interest (university autonomy, funding and quality) presented at the beginning from a European, Spanish and Catalan perspective taking

into account the major stakeholders at each level, the major policy development and the information from the interviews. From this overview some conclusions can be extracted.

Firstly, we have seen that essentially the assumed shifts in the three core policy issues studied have been:

- Regarding university autonomy, a shift in authority/responsibility with regards to higher education from the state to the institutions.
- Regarding funding a shift in, first, the amount of investment, and second, the public – private balance in the funding of higher education.
- As for quality, a shift in internal-external control balance with respect to intra-institutional quality assessment of higher education in Europe.

Secondly, the analysis has brought forth that the greatest ‘match’ between European, national and regional levels is found in the areas where the levels closest to the academics can make (or affect) the relevant policy decisions, and where these decisions can be expected to match the academic value system. We see then that the highest policy match is found in university autonomy, while the funding shift can only to a limited extent be influenced by the public authorities, and quality is a sensitive issue where public authorities are careful when they enter or touch upon the academic responsibilities with respect to the quality of their basic activities.

It could be expected that university autonomy, in complete consonance with the academic value system, would have a great policy match at the different levels. However, the extent to which this match is translated into ‘real’ institutional autonomy remains an open question. Interviewees declared that national regulation limits institutional autonomy to a great extent. The increase and diversification of funding for the higher education sector does not have such a straightforward link to the core academic values nor does it rely solely upon the public authorities, especially the diversification of funding sources. Quality evaluation and accreditation schemes touch directly upon the activities of academics and are, therefore, highly sensitive issues. Although no one questions the need for these procedures, the way they are designed and the criteria used are continuously under scrutiny and criticism.

Finally, the analysis confirms that European policies and policy proposals have some effect in the Spanish and Catalan higher education system, even though, it cannot be proved that they have a direct impact at an institutional level or on the basic activities themselves.

European policies, and as the policy documents analysed show, are used to justify certain reforms and developments. It cannot be said to be a causal relation but it can be affirmed that European policies appear consistently when new reforms or initiatives appear at national and regional level.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed at studying how and which European higher education policies are adopted at national and regional level by analysing the Spanish and Catalan policy arenas and by paying particular attention to three core policy areas: university autonomy, funding and quality. The research problem guiding this study was: *How are European level higher education policies adopted at the national and regional level?*

In this chapter the main findings of this study will be discussed and some ideas for further research will be presented.

### 5.1 Findings and discussion

Higher education policies and initiatives in the context we have studied in this research form part of a multi-actor and multi-governance context in which forces, influences and pressures determine each higher education system in a way that conditions how these policies and initiatives are adopted. Because of this multi-dimensionality in the governance of higher education, it can be expected that a particular change or interest at one level, be it European, national or regional, may have a direct or indirect effect at the other levels. Although this research does not aim to prove the causal relationships between higher education policies at a European level and policies at Spanish and Catalan levels the analysis has revealed that the most common preoccupations and goals are very similar at the different levels. Moreover, both Spanish and Catalan legislations refer to European higher education policies or developments (be it the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Strategy or the role of universities in the knowledge economy) as a justification for the reforms introduced by a particular law, or the recommendations proposed by a particular framework document or policy initiative (i.e. LOU, *Estrategia Universidad 2015* or *White Paper of the University of Catalonia*).

Nevertheless, the fact that goals are similar yet not the same, and that priorities differ between core policy issues such as autonomy, funding and quality, is in line with the argumentation presented by Gornitzka (2006:21) concerning the way in which European policies are diffused into the national (and regional in our case) higher education systems. Consequently, it is important to keep in mind the extent to which the shifts in the three core policy issues analysed ‘fit’ the dominant academic values in Spain and particularly in

Catalonia, given that universities as ‘loosely coupled organisations’ are, in general, successful in resisting external change initiatives that do not fit the academic basic set of values. This implies that the greatest ‘match’ between European, national and regional levels can be expected in areas where the levels closest to the academics can make the relevant policy decisions, and where these decisions can be expected to match the academic value system. With regards to the three policy issues analysed in this study, this signifies that the highest match can be expected in the acceptance of increasing university autonomy whereas increased and diversified higher education funding can, to a limited extent, be influenced by the public authorities. Finally, quality as an academic sensitive issue where public authorities usually have to be and are careful when they enter or touch upon the academic responsibilities, is where the least match can be expected.

The first assumption presented in this study stated that:

- a) Related to changes in the dominant policy views on the role of the state with respect to higher education in Europe, higher education policies in Spain (Catalonia) have progressively increased university autonomy.*

It could be expected that university autonomy being in line with the academic value system, would have, as seen, a great policy match at the different levels. However, the extent to which this match is translated into ‘real’ institutional autonomy remains an open question and interviewees declared that national regulation strongly limits institutional autonomy. In line with Mora and Vidal (2000), there is another important on-going debate related to university autonomy in Spain: the role of representatives from society in the governing bodies. Academics are particularly reluctant to allow external ‘interference’ in university affairs. They relate this reaction to historical causes (for many years universities suffered from a dictatorship control) which has linked democracy to autonomy (university autonomy is guaranteed by the Constitution). University autonomy is also closely understood as academic freedom, according to Mora. Spain therefore, would be located closer to the academic oligarchy angle of Clark’s triangle of coordination (Clark 1983:143) rather than the State or the market angles. According to Mora and Vidal (2000), the reforms introduced in the past decades in Spanish higher education have had important positive effects but also some negative setbacks. The most important setback is the excessive influence that academics have of the definition university policies, increased by regionalisation and the reduced external participation in the governing bodies. Therefore a university system is not

defined only by its legal framework, but also by the different forces that are at work both from outside and inside the system.

The second assumption declared that:

*b) Related to shifts in the dominant policy views on the public-private balance in the funding of higher education in Europe, the higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have increased and diversified their funding resources.*

The link to the European goal to increase and diversify funding for higher education in the Spanish and Catalan sector can be found in the Catalan authorities since higher education funding (excepting research) is under regional competence. In this case we have seen that there has been a positive commitment to accomplish the goal of increasing funding (although still far away from the Lisbon goals (2% of the GDP for higher education). Notwithstanding no relevant action has been taken in diversifying higher education resources especially from the private sector. Despite this, there is an overall match in the European and Catalan higher education funding policies.

Higher education in Spain is considered a public good where university autonomy plays an important role. As seen above, any external interference (especially by the private sector) has important negative connotations for the university community. Private funding (and privatisation of higher education) has been strongly criticised in the anti-Bologna movement and acting against academic freedom, both by students and academics. Once more we can see that policies that go against academic values are not accepted easily and that each higher education systems adapt the policies to their social, political, cultural and economic contexts (policy diffusion).

The third assumption used in this study stated that:

*c) Related to a shift in internal-external control balance with respect to intra-institutional quality assessment of higher education in Europe, the higher education institutions in Spain (Catalonia) have increasingly accepted the use of external quality assessment and accreditation mechanisms.*

Quality evaluation and accreditation schemes touch directly upon the performance and activities of academics and are, therefore, a highly sensitive issue. Although no one questions the need for these procedures, the way they are designed and the criteria used are

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continuously under scrutiny and criticism. In addition it must be noted that evaluation of consolidated academic staff is not obligatory and only new academics must be evaluated by the national quality agency<sup>62</sup>. At a national level, Spain is still in the process of introducing an internal quality culture (Mora 2007:149). Nevertheless the introduction and acceptance of quality assurance is seen as positive (Mora 2007:149). Catalonia had a head start on introducing external quality assurance processes as it began years before the national agency was established. Probably due to this the discussion seems to have moved on and centred on creating differentiated excellent institutional profiles to increase overall competitiveness of the Catalan higher education system. As well as to find the balance to adequately combine excellent education with the social function of universities to train the future labour force. The main danger detected, and where most criticisms are directed at, is the over-bureaucratisation of the evaluation processes and the strong political influence in the external agencies (Mora 2007:149).

As expected, the greatest match can be found, as expected, in the issue of university autonomy, whereas funding and quality assurance issues have a slight controversy and therefore do not match so straightforwardly with the European policies. Reasons behind these findings can be found in the contextual elements of the Spanish and Catalan higher education systems, where apart from the traditional academic values, historical (especially Franco's regime period), political and cultural issues play an important role.

In chapter 4 it was stated that European integration raises attention to a development in which nation-states are seeking (new) regulatory powers on an international level and become more dependent on supranational directions due to a shift of powers to the European level (Scharpf 2001) and that modern governance is and should be dispersed across multiple authority centres. We have seen how the Spanish higher education system has shifted power to the regions, external agencies (quality and accreditation) and to institutions. But on the European level, more than a shift in powers towards the European Commission regarding higher education, it is possible to argue that there is an increasing influence of the European Commission in the way national governments decide higher education policies. Countries adopt and adapt European policies and recommendations in a way that best suits their interests and their contextual features (including academic value systems), or so seen in the

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<sup>62</sup> Teaching and research staff evaluation (by the ANECA) is compulsory before recruitment.

Spanish and Catalan cases. In order to understand changes that take place in the different European higher education systems, it is necessary to grasp each system's setting and history. Only a detailed analysis will allow a thorough understanding of the transformations that have taken place or that are in the process of taking place.

## 5.2 Ideas for further research

Given all the different elements touched upon and the exploratory nature of this study a set of questions are brought forth that would be interesting to further research. A selection of these ideas is outlined below.

The first question that comes to the fore is derived from the limitations of this study: comparability. It would be interesting to compare the ways in which other European higher education systems have adopted and adapted European policies and specifically what the match is on the three core issues discussed. Would there be some similarities or would the context be crucial to defining the outcomes?

Another interesting question is the relationship between the different issues. Some studies have already been made in this direction, to quote just two, we find Volkwein in 1986 discussing the relationship between quality and autonomy. The conclusion in this case was that autonomy was not positively related to quality, so, more autonomy did not necessarily imply improved performance. Another more recent study was undertaken by the Aghion et al (2007) as a Bruegel Policy Brief and which discussed the positive correlation between autonomy and funding for improved performance. So, more autonomy increased the extent to which additional funding improved performance. Questions in this sense would be how these issues are connected and how the different degrees of policy 'match' are linked to these interrelations.

Moreover, some scholars state that what and how policies from other countries use, decide, translate or adopt will in turn modify the value of a policy for the others, either through defining reputational benefits (the adoption of a policy by another country creates a cultural norm)<sup>63</sup>, or through changing the terms of international competition<sup>64</sup> (Gornitzka 2009:32).

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<sup>63</sup> A policy that is widely adopted will also include a wider and more established support team network of users (Gornitzka 2009:32)

<sup>64</sup> This process or mechanism is known as 'adaptation to altered conditions' (from Gornitzka 2009:32).



It would therefore be interesting to further analyse if the adopted policies have any relation to similar ones being adopted in other European countries.

Last but not least, interesting question to approach would be to what extent European policies affect the actual higher education institutions. And related to this how, in turn, do national and even regional priorities affect the formulation of European policies? So, do policies filter down or do they filter up as well?

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## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix I: List of interviewees

#### *List of interviewees*

- Anna Maria Geli: Rector of the Universitat de Girona
- Eduard Aibar: Vice-Rector for Research (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)
- Joan Gomez Pallares: Vice-Rector for Research (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
- Josep Joan Moreso: Rector of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and President of the Catalan Association of Public Universities
- Juan Francesc Còrdoba: Department of Innovation, Universities and Enterprises (Generalitat de Catalunya)
- Juan Manuel del Pozo: Professor of Philosophy at the Universitat de Girona, former Minister of Education at the Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Lluís Ferrer: Former Rector of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
- Màrius Rubiralta: General Secretary for Universities (Ministry of Education)
- Pere Condom: Director of the Scientific and Technologic Park (Universitat de Girona)
- Pere Samitier: Former Rector of the Universitat de Barcelona

### 7.2 APPENDIX 2: Interview Outline

#### *Interview outline*

1. How do you understand ‘knowledge society and economy’? Does this understanding coincide with the interpretation of knowledge society and economy by the institution/body you work for?
2. Why do you think higher education is so important in the knowledge society/economy?



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3. How is the Lisbon Strategy and the EU's 'modernisation agenda' for universities seen and perceived in your institution/body?
  4. In the relevant literature generally four visions on university governance and organisation are identified, i.e.
    - The University as a self-governing community of scholars ("The Republic of Science")
    - The University as an instrument for national political agendas
    - The University as a representative democracy
    - The University as a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets

Which of these relates closest to your institution's governance and organisation today?  
Which one defines best your institution's objectives?

5. What is the role of the regional and national authorities regarding higher education in the context of the realisation of knowledge society/economy expectations and the implementation of the Lisbon 2000 Strategy?
6. What does the notion of the knowledge economy/society mean for your university in practice? How does your institution contribute to the further development of the knowledge society/economy? in Catalunya? What difference does knowledge society/economy make for your institution? Which aspects of the knowledge society/economy are most relevant for and have most effects on your institution?
7. How does the notion of knowledge society/economy affect your institution's research activities (Are there any specific disciplines / fields more promoted and supported than others? Where does the funding mainly come from? How is research stimulated or incentivised in your institution? How important is the notion of innovation in your institution's research strategy?)
8. How does the European Qualification Framework affect your institutional activities and policies? Has it had an effect in the curriculum design or planning, in teaching methodology, in student evaluation criteria?
9. How does the notion of KE/S influence your relationship with:
  - The Spanish federal as well as the Catalanian Government
  - European Commission

- Other higher education institutions (private)
- Industry
- Non-university research centres

10. Assume you would be asked to design the ideal university for the 21st century, what would this university look like; what would be the major differences and similarities with your current institution? // In your vision, what are the main characteristics of the university that is able to fulfil the academic, socio-economic and political demands of the 21st century?